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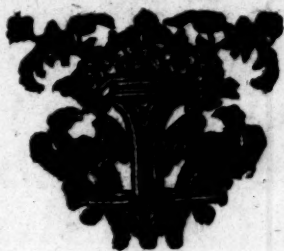
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## ACADEMY OF BELLES LETTRES AND INSCRIPTIONS at *Paris.*

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**IS proposed to comprize in four Volumes the best Papers in the Memoirs of the Academy of Belles Lettres at Paris, in the Manner we have taken in this; i. e. by bringing together Discourses relative to the same Subject, which are dispers'd in the Original; yet so, that each Volume shall contain a considerable Variety. Thus, in this Volume there are several Discourses upon Poetry in general, and its Rise and Progress; some Discourses upon Epick Poetry in particular, and upon the Epick Poems of Homer and Virgil. To these succeed some Discourses on Rhetorick, and its Beginning, Progress and Decline. Then follow some Discourses on Sculpture

iv ADVERTISEMENT.

ture and Painting. *And last of all, there is a Discourse upon the Progress of Politeness among the Romans, and an Enquiry into the Notions they had of true Urbanity or Politeness, in which several Reflexions are made upon ancient Education.*

*The next will contain Discourses upon other Arts and Sciences, such as Astronomy, Dancing, Riding, &c. and some Discourses upon Dramatick Poetry.*

*The Third will contain some very curious Remarks upon the Evidence of History. the Use of History, and the Characters of ancient Historians. To which will be added Descriptions of several ancient Customs and Usages religious and civil.*

*The Fourth will contain Observations upon Elegiack Poetry, upon Odes, Songs, Satires, Epigrams; and some very curious Observations upon Medals and Bas-reliefs.*

*'Tis*



## ADVERTISEMENT. v

'Tis certainly of as great Consequence to know the State of Polite Literature among the French, as to know their Cookery or Dress. In these we very servilely imitate them, while they leave us very far behind with respect to Academies for cultivating Painting, Sculpture, and all the polite Sciences and Arts, in the flourishing of which together with Commerce, to which they are far from being Enemies, consists the true Glory of Human Society. These Arts were properly called by the Ancients Humane Arts, or the Arts of Men; for by them are Men distinguished from the lower Species of Animals, which have only sensitive Appetites to gratify, and are quite devoid of those Ideas of Proportion, Harmony and Beauty, which render Men capable of relishing the Order and Harmony of Nature, and of imitating it by various ingenious Arts of Composition. 'Tis  
by

## vi ADVERTISEMENT.

*by these Arts Men are civilized and polished ||. But it must be own'd they cannot be so well promoted and improved by single Endeavours, as by the united Labours of many. And therefore Academies with publick Encouragement like those in France are necessary to that excellent Purpose.*

|| Inventas aut qui vitam excoluere per artes.

VIRG.



A DIS-



AN  
A P O L O G Y  
FOR  
P O E T R Y.

By the *Abbé* MASSIEU.\*



NE considerable Symptom of the small Degree of Certainty human Understanding is able to arrive at in any Science, is that surprising Diversity of Judgments it forms about the same Matter. Not only does the same Person judge very differently at different Times of the same Thing; but the Opinions of Nations seem likewise liable to the same Vicissitudes. What was lately in high Vogue  
B amongst

\* *Memoires de Literature, Tom. 2. p. 176. 4to.*



amongst a People, in a very few Years afterwards falls into Disrepute: That, which at one Time procured Honour and Esteem to a Person, at another discredits and abases him.

ALMOST every Art hath in its Turn felt the Effects of this Fickleness of human Temper and Taste; but none, I think, more than Poetry. We have seen it in Triumph for some Ages, and in others it hath been trampled upon with the utmost Contempt. About sixty Years ago, under the Ministry of one of the greatest Genius's *France* ever produc'd, Poetry was among us at the Height of its Glory. Those who excelled in it were honoured; it was the sure Road to Dignity and Riches: Now the ardent Zeal, with which it was cherished, seems to be abated. Very little Regard is now paid to the Merit of a Poet; and there are but very few Instances of Persons, who have either raised or enriched themselves by Commerce with the Muses.

NAY, Poetry is now not barely despised, it is generally condemned; more rigid, and perhaps less virtuous than our Fathers, what they regarded as an honest and useful Art, we treat as a frivolous, if not pernicious Amusement.

\* A PROTESTANT Minister of great Merit, Son to one of the best Criticks of the last Century, and Brother to a Lady who is an Honour to her Sex and to *France*, by her extensive Learning and refin'd Taste, hath lately published a very long Treatise to prove that Poetry is not merely useless, but exceeding dangerous: And a *Benedictine* Father, well known in the Republick of Letters, by his justly-esteemed Writings, hath sufficiently hinted, that he is of the same Opinion in this Matter with the Protestant Minister; for tho'

tho' he writes with greater Reserve, and in a more guarded Manner upon the Subject, and distinguishes two sorts of Poetry, one good and another bad; it is past Dispute, that the Principles, he lays down, conclude equally against both. But with all due Deference to Men of such Authority in the learned World, it must be acknowledged, nor will they themselves refuse it, that Poetry had in ancient Times a much more formidable Adversary: There is, among the Ancients, a most illustrious Defender of the Opinion they have espoused. *Plato* is on their Side: This great Man, whose Works have been the Admiration of all Ages, and are at this present Time most passionately ador'd by a few select Disciples, passes a Sentence of Condemnation against Poetry, and banishes Poets from his Republick. Now ought we to be silent when so distinguish'd a Person accuses? Or may we not, without violating the Respect due to a Genius of the first Form, modestly and impartially examine, whether, in the present Question, his singular Notion ought to carry it in Opposition to the almost universal Opinion of all other competent Judges?

AFTER having read, with the utmost Attention, all that hath been said against Poetry, I find the Accusation may be reduced to these two chief Articles; *It is affirmed, that this Art can only serve to corrupt the Judgment, and to deprave the Heart.* Suffer me, Gentlemen, to attempt the Vindication from this double Calumny, of a Branch of the *Belles Lettres*, which hath always passed for the most agreeable one; and in the noble Studies, to which you by the most august Orders apply your selves, hath furnished you with your greatest Ideas and happiest Expressions.

'Tis maintained, with relation to the Understanding, that Poetry contributes towards three very pernicious Effects upon it: That it softens and enervates it; that it begets an Aversion to all profitable and serious Study; and renders one incapable of profound Enquiries. Poetry, say some, presents nothing to the Mind but Falshood; it feeds it with Fables and Chimæras. It can't indeed be denied, that this Art makes use of Fiction; but then to what End does it feign, besides this alone, even that it may lead Men to Truth? There is no need of being more than initiated in the Mysteries of this Art, to know that the Fables it invents are Allegories. Who is ignorant that there are two Ways of instructing Men in the Truth; the one mysterious and covered, the other simple and unveil'd? The Ancients were fond of the former; we of the present Age declare in favour of the latter: And let us fancy it the better of the two, because it is the Way we prefer. But let us not absolutely condemn, without any Distinction or Reserve, the other, which is authorised by the Practice of the purest Antiquity. 'Tis well known that in those early Times, all the best Writers of every kind chose to conceal their Instructions under ingenious, pleasing Fictions. Not only did profane, but likewise sacred Teachers employ this Artifice. The Scriptures are full of Figures and Parables. He, who was Truth itself, deigned to have frequent Recourse to this Method of teaching and reforming Mankind. It would therefore be very unreasonable to blame the first Poets for preferring this Way of instructing to every other; they in so doing only conformed to the prevailing Taste of their Time, and followed the most generally approved Method of conveying Truth into the Mind.



IF we enquire what might have given Rise to this Fondness among ancient Writers for Allegories and Fables, we shall find that they were led to it by their thorough Knowledge of human Nature. For if we look a little into the Constitution of the human Mind, we can't choose but observe, that there is in the Breast of Man a secret Aversion to Truth; above all, when it thwarts any of our Passions, and opposes our natural Propensities: But in Proportion as Men hate Truth, they love Falshood; and hence comes their natural Liking to Tales and Fables. We may give ourselves what Airs we please of Gravity, but we are all Children in this Respect. A String of extravagant, ridiculous Adventures, quite devoid of all Shew of Probability, merely because it is adapted to raise our Wonder and Astonishment, hath, generally, more Power to attract or detain our Attention, than the wisest and most reasonable Discourse. Now the first Poets being also the first Philosophers, perceiving this Frailty in the human Heart, immediately saw that it was in vain to dream of extirpating it; and therefore judged it to be the wiser Course to endeavour to bring Good out of Evil, if they could: Accordingly they accommodated themselves to this Weakness; and making the best Use of what they could not alter, in order to gain their End, presented us with something that had the Appearance of Fiction, but led to a veil'd Truth.

THIS Manner of instructing was attended with another Advantage; it had thus a mysterious Air: And nothing is more likely to excite our Attention than what is disguised. Would you be sure of immediately awakening one's Curiosity to search any Matter to the Bottom? you need only

make a Shew as if you had a mind to hide it from him. Those Veils, those Masks, which ancient Poets threw over their Instructions, begot an Impatience to penetrate into Truths, which, had they been presented naked to them, would have passed quite unregarded.

IN fine, this Method most agreeably flattered the Self-love of their Readers, by leaving them Room to imagine they had made some Use of their own Judgment. The Mind of Man is naturally vain; it does not like to have an Object laid quite open to its View: When you do so, it immediately imagines you have a mean Opinion of its Penetration; it is pleased to have some Confidence put in its Sagacity, and to have something left to its own finding out. But it finds in Allegories all this Satisfaction; they open a large Field to Conjectures, which very often go a good deal farther than the Poet promised himself: And Truth gains by all this; it is discovered, and the Self-flattery attending the Discovery terminates in a real and solid Advantage. 'Twas thus the ancient Poets artfully employed human Passions to amend the human Heart, bringing the Remedy from the Disease. It is for this Reason, that *Homer*, than whom none was ever more thoroughly acquainted with the Heart of Man, hath filled his Writings with so many Allegories, the greater Part of which are sufficiently intelligible.

WHO, for instance, does not see, That the golden, everlasting Chain, with which *Jupiter* boasts he could draw up to him the Heavens, the Sea, the Earth, the whole Universe, and all the Powers mortal and immortal, signifies † the infinite

† See a much better Explication of this Fable in Mr. *Pope's* Note on the Place in *Homer. Odyssey, l. 8. v. 25.*  
It

infinite Distance and Disproportion between all created Beings, united together, and the sovereign Cause? That, the eternal Dissensions and Quarrels of the Gods, are designed to represent unto us the Opposition and War amongst the first Principles of which all Bodies are compounded? That, the Winds shut up in leathern Bags, which *Ulysses* hid so carefully from his Companions, are intended to convey this Moral, viz. That the Mysteries of Government ought to be kept secret from the People? That the *Sirens*, who by their enchanting Voice misled Passengers upon dangerous Shelves and Quick-sands; and, *Circe*, who by her Fascinations transformed Men into Brutes, are allegorical Emblems of the sad Effects of being seduced by the Charms of false Pleasure into vicious Courses? If there are some few Fables in *Homer*, which we are not now able to unriddle, let us not blame this great Poet, who was well understood in his own time; but believe, as is reasonable, that it is owing to our own Ignorance, and not to any Fault or Defect in him. Let us be so equitable as to think, that he always intended to couch a very useful Meaning under every Fable; and never design'd that any of them should be taken in a literal Sense. Succeeding Poets formed themselves according to this great Model, and after his Example have enveloped in Fictions almost all the Secrets of Morality, Theology and natural Philosophy; but in so doing, they had nothing but Truth in their View; and have always observed this as a fundamental Rule in their Art, which one of them expresses so happily in these Lines:

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*Rien*

It was perhaps designed to signify, that the Planets were kept in their Orbits by Gravitation upon the Sun, which was therefore called *Jovis Carcer*.



*Rien n'est beau que le vray : le vray seul est aimable.*

*Il doit regner par tout, & mesme dans la fable.*

IT is pretended, in the second place, that Poetry enervates the Mind, and bereaves it of all its Force and Activity. “ ’Tis impossible, say some, “ that being fettered by Measure or Rime, and “ softened by the Sweetness of Sounds, and the “ Smoothness of Numbers, it can rise to any “ thing truly great.” But may we not doubt, whether those who talk in this Strain have ever rightly comprehended the true Nature of Poetry? Had they been but a little acquainted with this Art, they would have known, that it chiefly consists in that so much boasted of Enthusiasm, which, seizing a Poet, quite transports him: borne along by a divine Impulse, he triumphs over every thing that stands in his way. Rime and Measure are to him but vain Obstacles. If in his first Efforts, while he is not yet sufficiently warmed, he finds them somewhat rebellious and intractable; yet he is no sooner inflamed with this celestial Fire, than he is so absolutely Master of them, that they range themselves, as it were spontaneously, into the Order his Reason commands; and, instead of enfeebling and confining, assist and strengthen it. For it is this perhaps which is most wonderful in Poetry; even that, tho’ it be tied down by very rigid Rules, yet it discourses with as much Ease upon every Subject, as Prose; while, at the same time, it treats of every thing with a Force and Energy to which Prose can never attain. Accordingly, all the ablest Masters in the Art of Thinking have look’d upon Poetry as the best School for learning that Art. They recommend nothing so much as reading the Poets, Ho-

*mer*

mer in particular : *Aristotle* proposes him as the Pattern to be imitated by every one who would learn to write well, setting him far above all other Writers, both with respect to Sentiment and Expression. His Works, according to *Cicero*, could not be too often in the hands of those who aspired to true Eloquence. In the Opinion of this excellent Judge, as prodigious a Genius as *Homer* had for Poetry, he was more Orator than Poet. One cannot read without Astonishment what *Quintilian* says of him : he speaks of him as one who had extended the Boundaries of human Genius to their utmost stretch ; and possessed so complete Ideas of all the different Kinds of Writing, that he singly is a perfect Model of all the various Beauties which can enter into any Composition. *Longinus* is for ever quoting him, and fetches more Examples from his Writings, than from all other Authors put together. Now we are certainly not a little vain, to say no worse, if we fancy ourselves better skilled in the Sublime than *Aristotle*, than *Cicero*, than *Quintilian*, than *Longinus*. But these admirable Criticks were of opinion, that it is among the Poets principally, we must look out for Models of perfect Writing : And where indeed can we find more excellent Patterns, than in the Writings of *Homer* and *Virgil*, of *Sophocles* and *Euripides*, of *Pindar* and *Horace* ? And, if I may venture to add to them Names, which, in all probability, will be joined with them to the most distant Ages of the World, in those of *Malherbe*, *Racan*, *Corneille* and *Racine* ? Do we not discover in their Works, all that human Invention hath been able to conceive of truly grand, sublime and heroick ? Can we consider the noble Sentiments, the daring, happy Strokes, with which these Authors abound, without being animated by their Fire, without feeling their

their Elevation and Sublimity diffuse itself upon us? But if we pass from profane to sacred Poetry, and cast our eyes upon the Hymns in the Books of *Moses* and *David*; what wonderful Effects must those numberless, lively, inimitable Beauties have upon our Minds, which present themselves to us there on every side? Rivers which flow back to their Sources; Seas which meet and retire; Hills which tremble; Mountains which dissolve as Wax, and vanish before the Presence of their Creator; the Heavens and Earth hearkening to his Voice with profound respectful Silence; all Nature in Convulsion, and shaking from its Foundations before him who poised it, are perhaps the most elevated Expressions that were ever pronounced. What Mind is not struck with Amazement by these awful Images? What more proper than such Ideas, to awaken and expand the human Soul, and to raise it above itself? What Treasures may not be brought from these Mines, did we but know how to dig for them! What an exhaustless Source is here of sublime Sentiments and lofty Expressions! 'Tis therefore a very false and groundless Reproach, to charge Poetry with sinking and debasing the Mind: She might perhaps be more justly reproached with elevating it to too high a pitch. But, even in this respect, she sets bounds to herself: She knows how to regulate her Course even in her most rapid Flights; and, in her highest Transports, is Mistress of every Motion. One of her principal Rules is, that one cannot be too careful to avoid Excess. Some Pieces of a certain kind excepted, the particular Character of which demands unbridled Impetuosity; in all others, Poetry purposely restrains her Vigour, and giving no farther Scope to Fancy than is necessary, she marks out to us the  
Height



Height to which we may soar, and the Boundaries within which we ought to keep.

BUT at least, say some, Poetry is an Impediment to Science. " Her Charms spoil our Relish for  
 " the other Studies which are less agreeable, but  
 " more solid. A Poet, enchanted and wholly  
 " occupied by his Imagination, has neither Dis-  
 " position nor Time for profound Researches,  
 " and despises every other severe Employment of  
 " the Intellect." Now, it is true, that Poetry has her Allurements; and that, amidst all the Variety of Arts which employ Mankind, there is no Set of Men which ought to be more on their guard than Poets, against the Deceits of Self-flattery. But this does not prove, that they may not, and ought not to be sensible of the Advantages redounding from the other Sciences and Arts. It is not only possible that a Poet may be learned, but there is a Necessity he should be so. All those who have given Rules with respect to Eloquence, demand a prodigious Stock of Erudition to make an Orator. They require that he should be deeply conversant in Law, Philosophy, History, Mythology, Chronology, and Geography. *Quintilian* adds to all these Geometry and Musick. But if all this Science and Erudition be requisite to equip an Orator, they are much more so to finish a good Poet. For it seldom happens, that some of these Sciences can find a place in a Pleading or Harangue; whereas almost all of them enter very naturally into a Poem of any considerable length. In fact, it appears from the Writings of all the more esteemed Poets, that they have been extremely learned. What did he not know who gave birth to all the other Poets, and who, with the Consent of all Ages, is the first in Merit as well as in Time? Thoroughly acquainted with all the Labyrinths of  
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the human Heart, the Structure of the human Body, the Characters and Manners of all Nations, the Situation and Peculiarities of every Country; all the different Properties of Animals; the Ebbing and Flowing of the Sea; the Revolutions of the celestial Bodies, and the Springs of their Motions; the Courses and Fountains of all Rivers; and the Secrets of all Arts Liberal and Mechanical; he seems to have been ignorant of nothing that Man can comprehend; and his Knowledge appears to have no other Limits but those of universal Nature. If *Virgil's* Intelligence was not so vast, yet it was extensive to a truly marvellous pitch. What prodigious Insight had he into all the Secrets of Agriculture, concerning which he hath left such beautiful Precepts! How accurately did he understand the ancient Customs of *Italy*, which he hath so exactly described; and all the Mysteries and Ceremonies of the *Pagan* Superstition, of which he hath transmitted the most curious Memorials and Monuments that are preserved to us! The *Roman* History, which he hath found the Secret of interweaving into his Poem with such wonderful Art, and of treating with all the Pomp and Magnificence so rich a Subject required; the Philosophy of *Epicurus*, which he hath almost wholly enclosed in one Eclogue; that of *Pythagoras* and *Plato*, of which he hath given us so masterly an Idea in the sixth Book of the *Æneid*! But it is not the ancient Poets only who have been learned; it might easily be made appear, that among the Moderns, those who have been most distinguished for their profound Erudition, have all of them been Poets. None will dispute the Learning of our *Scaliger*, of *Grotius*, or of *Petavius*. And their Passion for Poetry is well known. *Scaliger* has left us a large Collection of Poems, and a very full Treatise on the Poetick Art. There  
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are several Pieces of *Grotius*, written with such Elegance and with such Purity of Style, that, in the Judgment of the best Criticks, they are not unworthy of ancient *Rome*. When one reads the Poems of *Petavius* in *Greek* or *Latin*, he cannot conceive how he could possibly find time for composing other excellent Works upon the most important Subjects; and is prompted to think, he passed his whole Life in reading *Homer* and *Virgil*, whose Character and Turn he was so capable of imitating. And, were it permitted to name living Examples, I could mention one of the most learned Persons in *Europe*, who being a consummate Master of every Branch of Literature, and passing his time at *Aubenay*, as *Cicero* did his at *Tusculum*, composes *Latin* Verses as well, if not better, than any one now living. I could, without going from this Company, find one whose least Merit is that of being a Poet: who being a good Geometrician, a good Naturalist, and a good Astronomer, hath joined to his Skill in the most profound, abstracted Sciences, all the Gaiety, all the Charms of the *French* Muses. If therefore we find by personal Experience, that the Love of Versification hinders us from rising to such Studies, let us not impute this to Poetry, which, far from excluding the Sciences, has frequent need of their Assistance; but let us frankly acknowledge, that Nature did not intend we should be of that select, privileged Number, who are capable of every thing.

It must however be owned, that, generally speaking, the World has no very high Idea of the Learning of Poets. Now, whence comes this so unfavourable, so false Opinion of them? It is because we form our Judgment of Poets from the great Number of those who bear a Name they very ill deserve: For to whom is it not now given?



given ? It is prostituted to every Songster or Madrigal-Writer, who, instead of having formed his Taste upon the Rules prescribed by *Aristotle* and *Horace*, and those immortal Models *Homer* and *Virgil* have left us, sometimes makes a boast of his Ignorance of the Languages in which these Authors wrote ; who knows no other Patterns of the Sublime but *Cyrus* and *Clelia* ; and whose sole Merit consists in being able to rime away the Phrases of such Romances : to Authors who, being in themselves quite barren, quite void of Invention, a Quality which constitutes the very Essence of a Poet, piece up their own Works with Scraps stolen from other Writers ; and who, accustomed to the soft Language of a whining Gallantry, are at a loss what to say in their Verses, when they have not a *Cephisa* or a *Cloris* to entertain : A trifling, superficial Sett, who, aiming at nothing higher than the Approbation of their own little Circle of Admirers, make a noise at a distance, and for some time ; but are utterly unacquainted with the great Beauties of Composition, which are not peculiar to any Country or Age, but universal and eternal, and give Immortality to the Works they adorn. This is not the Idea that the Masters of the Art have always had of a Poet. If we may trust to their Judgment, to deserve that glorious Appellation, one must have received from Nature a sublime Genius, and a rich, fertile Imagination ; he must have all the greatest Qualities of the Mind centring in him ; Elevation, Force, Fertility, Agility, Address : He must have cultivated these happy Talents by a long Study of Precepts and Models ; in embellishing what he borrows from others, he must mix many more Beauties entirely his own ; in drawing from the Treasures of Arts and Sciences, he must know how to speak of every Subject without Affectation,

fection, and with Grace: In fine, he must be able, by a continued Train of Marvels incessantly, and throughout the whole Career of his Work, to excite and to support our Admiration; and, remembering that he writes for all Mankind, he must possess the Secret of pleasing Readers of the most different Turns, and of securing Approbation to himself from all Ages and Nations. But who does not perceive, that all this demands a vast Fund of natural Abilities, and a very ample Provision of acquired Knowledge?

BUT if Poetry is far removed from any Tendency to sophisticate the Judgment, it is yet farther removed from any corrupt Influence upon the Heart. We must not judge of an Art by the bad Use which may be made of it. According to such a Maxim, there would be nothing good in the World; since there is nothing which human Corruption hath not abused. The only Question therefore, with respect to any Art, is, whether it proposes an honest laudable End; and whether the Means it employs are not lawful. Now, if we examine Poetry by these two Rules, we cannot refuse it a place among the most useful Arts. It proposes to itself the most excellent Scope; and employs, in order to compass it, no Means which are not allowable.

'Tis certain, that if we consider it at its primitive Institution or Origin, it was first of all invented for instructing Mankind, and to teach them the most important Truths in Religion, in Politicks, and in Morals.

IN Religion, I say; for the most ancient and most beautiful Pieces of Poetry were consecrated to the Glory of the true God. This Art, which now a-days appears so profane, took its Rise amidst Festivals instituted in Honour of the supreme Lord of the Universe: On these solemn Days,

Days; when Men rested from their Labours, and gave themselves up to innocent and useful Mirth, it came into their Minds, either by Chance or by Instinct, to regulate their Steps and their Words by certain Measures. Such was the Origin of Musick, Dancing, and Poetry. But when the Worship which is due to the Creator alone was transferred to Creatures, Poetry followed the Fortune of Religion; it was then used to render Thanksgivings to false Divinities, and to implore their Favour and Protection. 'Tis true, Men soon began to employ it to other Purposes; but in all Ages care was taken to keep it chiefly to its first Intention. *Hesiod* put the Genealogy of the Gods into Verse: *Callimachus* composed Hymns in Honour of them: Those commonly ascribed to *Homer* are the Works of some very ancient Poet. Poems upon other Subjects represented all Events as regulated and administered by the Interposition of Divine Powers: They taught Men to revere the Gods as the Authors of every Event; they every where exhibit them as the sovereign Arbitrators of our Fates. 'Tis the Gods who raise or abate human Courage; they give Prudence, or bereave Men of it; they send Victory, or occasion Defeats: Nothing grand or heroick is accomplished without the visible or secret Assistance of some Divinity: And amidst all the Truths which Poets teach us, this is what they most frequently inculcate, and are at the greatest Pains to rivet upon our Minds; even that human Valour and Wisdom can do nothing without the Succours of Providence. If the Gods, in Poetry, abandon themselves to their Passions; if they plunge themselves into Vices of every kind; if they often exceed the worst of Men in Partiality, in Violence, in Fury, in Impunity, Poetry ought not  
to



to be accused on this Score. It is doing great Injustice to impute to it, as is commonly done, the Introduction of such monstrous Opinions. For, on the contrary, 'twas, in some degree; these Opinions which gave Birth to it. If Poetry took its Rise in these solemn Festivals consecrated to false Gods, false Divinities must have been believed in and worshiped previously to Poetry; And therefore the whole Crime of the first Poets, is, their having accommodated themselves to the prevailing Creed, and spoken of the supreme Being conformably to the Prejudices of their Age and Country. It is unfair to charge the *Greek* and *Roman* Poets with all the Absurdities of Pagan Superstition. It is not as Poets they entertained such unworthy Ideas of the Divinity; it is as *Greeks* and *Romans*. 'Tis not the Fault of the Art they professed; it is owing to the Unhappiness of the Times and Nations in which they were born; it is the deplorable Effect of that profound Darkness, in which God, in the Course of his impenetrable Judgments upon Mankind, had suffered Nations to be involved, which in other Respects were so greatly enlightened and so highly polished. When the Light of the Gospel had dissipated this Darkness, Poetry changed a second Time its Object; altering as Religion altered; It returned to the true God, from whom it had departed, and thus finished as it had begun. A great Number of Christian Poets employed, and still continue to employ it, in celebrating the most august and holy Truths: The Church judged proper that this Art should bear a share in its religious Customs.

BUT Poets were not only the first Theologues, they were likewise the first Philosophers. 'Tis well known how greatly they contributed, in the first gross Ages, towards polishing Mankind;

congregating them into States and Cities, and uniting them in the Pursuit of a common Interest. This marvellous Work is one of the Miracles Harmony and Numbers have produced. Hence those Fables spread over the World concerning *Amphion*, who is said to have raised the Walls of *Thebes* by the enchanting Sound of his Lyre; and *Orpheus*, who is celebrated for having softened Rocks, and tamed ferocious Beasts, by the sweet Melody of his Song. Those who framed Laws for nascent Commonwealths, expressed them in Poetical Language, being persuaded that the Language would gain more Respect, and give greater Energy to their Statutes; and that they had, I know not what, secret Power to instill and impress upon the Mind. It is very certain that *Solon*, who flourished a long time afterwards, put into Verse the greater part of the Laws which he gave to one of the wisest States that ever existed in the World. The Ancients set him forth not only as a great Legislator and a considerable Philosopher, but likewise as an excellent Poet. History has preserved to us some of his Poetry, and informs us, that he had composed above six thousand Verses. And the Descendants of these first Poets seem in fact to have inherited their humane and social Disposition. It has been often remarked, that they are peculiarly fitted for Society and friendly Commerce; whether it be because they have naturally a more sweet and agreeable, a more gay and pleasant Cast of Mind; or because their Studies have a smoothing and harmonizing Influence upon the Temper; or whether in fine, because being charmed with their Employment, and but little touched by what makes the ordinary Object of human Ambition, they never think of thwarting Men in these Pursuits: Whatever may be the Cause of it, they are in possession of peculiar Love and Esteem.

Esteem: *Virgil* and *Horace* were the Delights of *Augustus's* Court: *Marot* and *Saint-Gelais* of that of *Charles* the ninth. In later times the *Voiture's*, the *Sarazin's*, the *Pelisson's*, and the *Segrais's*, have been regarded as the Life, the Joy, the Ornament of the most select Companies. They were as much beloved on account of their amiable Manners, as they were esteemed for their admirable Talents; and we cannot yet pronounce their Names, without presenting to our Minds all that is contained in the Idea of Civility, Gallantry and Politeness.

BUT one of the principal Aims of Poetry hath been to form the Manners of Mankind. To be convinced of this, we need only consider the particular End of each Species of Poetry, and call to mind the more general Practice of the most illustrious Poets. The *Epick* had for its Scope to convey Instructions to us, couched under the Allegory of one important heroick Action: The *Lyrick*, to celebrate the Virtues and noble Achievements of great Men, in order to engage us to imitate their Example: *Tragedy*, to regulate our Pity and Fear, by familiarizing us to those Passions, which, when they surpass certain Bounds, create us so much Trouble and Disquiet: *Comedy* and *Satire*, to correct our Vices in a pleasing, diverting manner, and to wage an implacable War against whatever is absurd or ridiculous in Conduct: The *Elegy*, to shed tears over the Graves of Persons whose Death deserved to be mourned and regretted: The *Eclogue*, to sing the innocent Pleasures of the Country Life. If, in succeeding times, these different Kinds of Poetry have been misapplied to other Purposes, yet it is certain, that this was to force them out of their natural Channel, and that originally all of them had one and the same Scope, which was, to make Men



wiser and better. Accordingly in all Ages the Poets, who knew the End, the Nature, the Duty of their Art, have employed it to that noble Design. I shall not speak of the moral Sentences of *Theognis*; of the Philosophical Poem of *Phocylides*; of the Golden Verses attributed to *Pythagoras*, a small Work above all Praise, the Value of which hath been lately made known to us by an excellent Translation: If all the ancient Works in Verse were like to these three, it would be no difficult Task to defend Poetry. For they teach the most pure and refin'd Morality; give to every Duty its proper Place, and contain a just Abstract of the wisest Sentiments which human Reason hath been able to form. I pass therefore to other Poetical Compositions, about which there is room for more Dispute, and to which Justice is by no means rendered. And I shall begin with the Works of the two greatest Poets that ever lived, *Homer* and *Virgil*. What Design did they propose to themselves by these Poems, which in all Ages have been so highly admired, and which are justly regarded as Master-pieces of human Wit? Can we imagine, that those sublime Genius's composed Verses merely to string Words together according to the Rules of Numbers; and thus to give a vain, transitory Pleasure to the Ear? The very Structure alone of their Works is sufficient to convince us that they had a nobler Aim in view. In the *Iliad*, "Achilles quarrels with Agamemnon, and retires. Hitherto the Greeks had been victorious. But now Affairs change their face. Beat every day, and reduced to the last Extremity, they have no Resource left but the Reconciliation of these two Princes." Now it requires but very little Penetration to discover, that *Homer* designed thus to teach us, that the Safety of a People depends upon the good Intelligence and

and Harmony among their Rulers. In the *Odyfsey*, "*Ulysses* is far from his Country. During his Absence neighbouring Princes intrude into his House; give Law to his Wife and Son, and commit Injuries and Violences of every sort. The Prince returns, dissipates all these Troubles, and restores the Tranquillity of his Family and State." And who does not see that *Homer* intended thus to shew us, that the Preservation of good Order in a Family or State, chiefly depends upon the Presence and Vigilance of its Master and Governour. The Poet therefore had no less a View in these two Poems, than that of exhibiting the Means of publick and private Happiness, and the proper Methods of establishing and securing the Peace and Prosperity of States and Families. And did ever human Mind conceive a nobler Prospect? *Virgil* wrote at *Rome* in the Infancy of an unsettled Empire. Charmed with the *Roman* Grandeur, and transported by the Generosity of *Augustus*, who had loaded him with Favours, he plans a Work which might at once do Honour to his Country, and indirectly corroborate the rising Authority of his Prince. In this view he chose for the Heroe of his Poem, a Man whom the Gods called to found a Kingdom in *Italy*. All the Elements continue to obstruct the Accomplishment of this Enterprize. A great Queen employs all the Charms of Beauty, and all her Regal Power, to disappoint that Event. A young audacious Rival makes a handle of his Rights by Blood and Vicinity, and excites an Insurrection to oppose it. But in spite of all these Obstacles, the Design of Heaven is effectuated, and a Kingdom is founded. *Virgil*, by this artful indirect Method, displays to us this great Truth; That when it is the Will of Heaven to set a Master over a People, the only Part they can

can take, is that of adoring the Pleasure of Providence, and submitting to lawful Authority. If we believe the best Criticks, these are the Morals of those three grand Fables: nor can we doubt of it, unless we obstinately attach ourselves to the mere Surface, and refuse to penetrate to the bottom of them. And if from these general Instructions, which are, as it were, the Plan and Oeconomy of these Poems, we descend to the particular Lessons scattered through the Body of these Works, what a Multiplicity do we find there of important Truths, which may serve for our Direction in the Conduct of Life! When we see in *Homer*, one Woman kindling a ten Years War, and occasioning almost the total Ruin of two famous Nations; another giving rise to a Quarrel between two Heroes, whose Union was of the last Consequence; when we see one of these Heroes, abusing his supreme Authority, carry off the Booty allotted to the other for his share, and by that unseasonable Act of Despotism hazarding the Supply of a whole Army; and that the other, by giving a loose to his Resentment, and obstinately refusing to return, causes the Destruction of an Infinity of Persons, among whom at last his own best Friend fell; and that this Friend, elated by former Success, suffer'd his Presumption to carry him on to his Ruin: When one, I say, sees an Infinity of such Examples, can he choose but reflect within himself upon the fatal Effects of Love, of Anger, of Injustice and Violence, and of headstrong, presumptive Self-confidence? But this Poet does not only excell in painting out the Miseries into which unbridled Passions precipitate; he is equally successful in exhibiting to view the Virtues, with all their Graces and Charms. When we behold venerable, experienced gray Hairs, hearkening to others with at-



tentive Respect ; a Heroe ready for Combat, bidding the most tender, touching Adieu to his Son and his Wife, and trembling for them, whilst, with respect to himself, he is absolutely unmoved ; when we see two Warriors just upon the point of engaging, discover that they are the Sons of Fathers who lived in great Amity, and mutually revering each in the other the Sentiments of their Fathers ; two others, when the Combat was over, in which they had acquitted themselves with all the Valour they owed to their Country and their own Glory, behave themselves with equal Generosity one towards the other, and take leave of one another in the most obliging friendly Manner ; when we behold two of the greatest Heroes in the Army, tho' malcontent, yet exerting themselves to give a kind Reception to the Deputies sent to them, and entering into the Care of Affairs which Men of less Note would have devolved on others, and greatening the meanest Services by the Nobleness of Soul with which they descended to them for the publick Good ; when we see the most fierce and untractable of Men forget his personal Resentments, to avenge the Death of his Friend ; and when he had done the Duty of Friendship, yield the Body of the Vanquished to the Tears of a Father, and tenderly sympathize with the Misfortune of an Enemy : How can we but be touched by such moving Instances of Decency, of conjugal and paternal Tenderness, of Generosity, of Magnanimity, of Friendship, of Humanity ! See now the Reason why *Aristotle* said, that Poetry was better adapted to instruct than History ; and why *Horace* affirmed, that *Homer* was the most excellent of all Moralists ; and taught in a much more powerful Manner than *Chrysippus* and *Crantor*, what was becoming

becoming and virtuous; and what was base and dishonourable.

If *Virgil* had told us directly, that Piety is the chief Virtue even in a Heroe; the Duties of natural Affection ought to have the next Place to those of Religion; a Son is obliged to forget himself, in order to save his Father; the Death of those who gave us Birth, does not put an end to filial Duty; we ought to leave the most agreeable Settlement, and break thro' the most endearing Attachments, when the Voice of Heaven calls upon us to other Duties: Every one would have been charmed with the Excellence of such moral Lessons. But *Virgil* tells us all this, when he assigns to his Heroe a constant, unvarying Piety, that never fails in its Duties; when he sets before us one who flings himself amidst the Flames of a burning City to save his Father; who celebrates anniversary Games upon his Tomb; who descends into the infernal Regions to have an Interview with him; who, at the first Command of the King of Heaven, forsakes a Queen for whom he hath the warmest Sentiments of Love and Gratitude. 'Tis true, he does not deliver these Truths in the Form of Precepts, or in pompous Terms. But are they less adapted to touch us, that they are proposed with more Art and in a modester Tone? May not an Author be instructive and moral, tho' he does not write like *Seneca*? These sagacious Poets understood human Nature too well, to take that haughty, fastuous Air: They knew it rather raises a Mutiny, and disgusts, than instructs. It offends our Delicacy and Self-love, which, tho' it be not absolutely averse to Reproof, would however be reproved in a respectful Manner. We cannot bear patiently with one who has so high an Opinion of his Pre-eminence, as to take upon him to preach to others. And one is apt to

to suspect, that Care to ramass fine shining Sentences, proceeds rather from Ambition to display Wit, and make a Figure, than from Concern about our Morals. Besides, we are disposed to persuade ourselves, that such a Writer carries things to an Extreme, and proposes a Degree of Perfection above human reach: We are ready to compare his own Conduct with his Maxims; and we find, to the Philosopher's shame, that the former destroys what the latter builds. But in a Work which simply exhibits to us the Action of some great Personage, all these Disadvantages are avoided: the Author does not draw upon himself that which is odious in an Instructor. He himself gives no Lessons or Reproofs; 'tis the Virtues of a third Person which instruct or reprove us. Add to this, that Example hath this Advantage, that it demonstrates the Practicability of what it teaches. 'Tis for these Reasons, that the Poets have preferred instructing by Examples, to Precepts or Maxims. But if, in order to be instructive, it be necessary to intersperse a Work with Sentences, this sort of Merit is not wanting in the two Poets we have named. They employ them indeed very sparingly, having avoided nothing so much as the Appearance of erecting themselves into Preceptors to Mankind. They have not absolutely rejected them, but have used them with Discretion, whenever they seemed proper to diversify or to animate their Style. How many Truths are there in *Homer* and *Virgil*, delivered even in the sententious Manner! If Time permitted me, it would be easy to shew, that Princes and Subjects, Magistrates and private Persons, Fathers and Children, and in general all Ranks and Orders of Life, may find sufficient Instruction, concerning all their respective Duties and Obligations, in the few Sentences with which these Poets have enriched



riched their Works. It is therefore an uncontrovertible Truth, that they have taught Morality in all the different Manners it can be inculcated upon us; by Allegories, by Examples, and by Maxims; and they are preferable to Philosophers in this Respect, that the latter employ but one of these three, and that perhaps the least effectual.

Now if I would make an Analysis of the best Pieces of *Euripides* and *Sophocles*, I should be able to prove, that there never was a better School for Virtue than the ancient Tragedy. There, instead of exciting any dangerous Flame, the miserable Consequences of any misguided or uncontroul'd Passion are set to View in the most affecting manner. There the severest Morality was taught; instead of palliating Crimes, and contriving Excuses and Allevations for them, Men were made to tremble even for involuntary ones. There the Chorus, which made one of the principal Ornaments in ancient Spectacles, was chiefly employ'd to render Honour to the Gods, and Justice to Men; to maintain the Cause of good Men against Scelerates; to offer up Vows and Supplications to Heaven in favour of Innocence, and Imprecations against Villany. I must transcribe the whole of *Pindar* and *Horace*, if I would repeat all the momentous Principles of Morality diffused through their Works. More Philosophers than Poets, their chief Intention was to improve Reason; and to purify the Heart from every vicious Passion; to give us useful Rules for our Behaviour, not only under Adversity, but likewise in prosperous Circumstances, which are more dangerous to Virtue than Afflictions; and to establish a perfect Tranquillity in our Minds, by rescuing us from the Tyranny of Cupidity and of Fear.

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BUT some may say, all Poets have been far from making this Use of their poetical Talents. The greater Number have dishonoured and profaned the Art, by prostituting it to the worst of Purposes ; they have made a base Traffick with it ; they have sold it to Flattery ; they have employed it not only to inflame and strengthen disorderly Appetites in their own Bosoms ; but even in order to communicate them to others, and to propagate them as universally as they were able. Now, we cannot too much detest those publick Corrupters, who have perverted a divine into a diabolical, infernal Art. If the learned Men who appear Enemies to the Muses, had only attacked such Poetry, who would not join with them in declaiming against the Abuse ? But their Bias, the whole Strain of their Invectives, their winding, indirect Methods, leave no room to doubt, that their Quarrel is with the Art itself. Let them explain their Meaning, speak out plainly, and tell us what their Intention is : Can they pretend to say, that Poetry is in itself a bad Art ? We cannot induce ourselves to think this is their Sentiment ; for it is an incontestable Verity, that what is in its Nature bad, can never be good in any Case : But it cannot be refused, that Poetry may sometimes be good. One must be in a very bad Humour, if he can find Fault with the excellent Pieces, which have no other Scope or Tendency but to reform Mankind ; and one must throw aside all Regard to Religion, and become avowedly impious, before he can condemn those beautiful Poems to be found in the sacred Writings. All then, that they can reasonably pretend is, that Poetry hath been often abused : But is this a Reason for rejecting the Art ? Hath Prose never been abused ? May I not adventure to assert, that the most pernicious Writings  
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against Religion or Morality are its Brats? -- In all Ages Error, Heresy, Libertinism, have employed it to propagate their detestable Maxims; and can we infer from hence that Writing in Prose ought not to be permitted? Poetry, say they, is abused. Alas! what hath not been abused? Every Day a very bad Use is made of the Powers of Thinking and Speaking; and must we therefore neither think nor speak? What shall we say of the most venerable and sacred Things? Who knows not to what sacrilegious Profanations these are liable? Ought they to be banished the World, because rash, audacious, impious Men violate and trample upon them? If not, it would certainly be unjust to condemn Poetry, because there have been Poets who have misemployed their Talents, and made no other Use of them, but to eternize the Memory of their abominable Dissoluteness. It is as if one should plead for the Extermination of the Art of Painting, because some Painters have made a Pandor of their Pencil to Debauchery and Lewdness. If *Carache* has scandalized the World by the Licentiousness and Immodesty of some Figures, has not *Raphael*, *Guido* and *Poussin* edified us, by setting before our Eyes beautiful Representations of the noblest Events in sacred or profane History? For a few Pictures of the lascivious Kind, how many have we which exhibit virtuous and praise-worthy Actions? And may we not say the same of Poetry and Versification? For a few which make pernicious Impressions, how many are there which give most salutary Lessons? Let us set the one over against the other: Let us oppose to the infamous Things in *Catullus*, in *Ovid*, and in *Martial*, the refined Morality of *Theognes* and of *Pythagoras*; to the idle Trifles with which some have filled their

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Works, let us oppose the grave and majestic Poems of *Homer* and *Virgil*, the sublime Odes of *Horace* and *Pindar*; to the licentious Sonnets or lascivious Tales of our Times, let us oppose the Imitation of *Jesus* done into Verse by Mr. *Cornille*, the Life of Christ by Mr. *d'Andilly*, the sacred Poesy of Mr. *Godeau*, the charming Stanzas of *Malherbe* and *Racan*. In fine, let us oppose to all that Poetry hath ever produced of corrupt Influence, the Book of *Psalms* and the two *Canticles* of *Moses*, dictated by the Spirit of God, which speak of the sovereign Being with a Majesty suitable to the Grandeur of the Subject; which trace out to Mankind Rules of Conduct in all the Stations in which it may please Divine Providence to place them; and which shall therefore remain an eternal Justification of Poetry, against the vain Sophistry of those who attack it.

It remains to shew, that the Means Poetry uses are allowable; and this I shall endeavour to prove, in answer to *Plato's* Objections. The first of which is, that it is the End of Poetry to please the Imagination; and I am not afraid to aver, that, on this Occasion, that great Man confounds the End with the Means. The Intent of Poetry is not to please the Imagination, as he pretends; it is to inform and enlighten the Understanding: But because Man is compounded of Soul and Body, Experience hath proved, that in consequence of an intimate Union between her material and immaterial Part, one of the finest Ways of entering into the Heart, is, by passing through the Imagination. It hath been observ'd, that the most solid, important Truths, do not make very strong Impressions, when they are proposed in a naked simple Manner: And therefore it hath been essayed to cloath them  
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with Ornaments ; and thus to gain Admittance to the Useful by means of the Agreeable. The only Question then on this Head is, Whether there be any Evil in this Art of procuring Audience to Truth ? But that there is none, can hardly be controverted, whether we attend to the Manner in which we are framed ; or whether we consider the Practice of all Ages. For since the Author of Nature hath endued us with an imaginative Power, he certainly intended we should make some Use of it ; and much more, that we should employ it to some good Purpose : But what better Use can we make of it, than to employ it as a Canal to convey Truth into our Minds and Hearts ? Accordingly we see, that all the greatest Men, Poets, Orators, Historians and Philosophers of every Country, of every Age, of every Sect, have not scrupled to use it, as not only an innocent but a very useful Artifice. They have without balancing employed in their Writings, Turns, Figures, Energy, riches of Expression, Cadence of Periods, and Harmony of Numbers, Things which all of them have their Source from the Imagination. Never did one imagine he was obliged in Conscience to write in a dry, insipid, disagreeable Manner. Does *Plato* give in a Libel against all the most distinguished Writers ? He, who of all Authors ought to be the last to condemn this Manner of teaching Truth ; since there is none who hath oftener had Recourse to it, or who better succeeded in it. It is astonishing that the same *Plato*, who inveighs so vehemently against Eloquence and Poetry, should himself be, of all Men, the Person who best understood the Beauties of both, and hath most frequently employed them. Who was more eloquent than this great Man ? Did not he possess, to the highest Pitch, all the

the good Qualities of an accomplish'd Orator? Where is to be found more Elegance, greater Variety, more Sweetness, more Address, more of the insinuating, captivating Art? Where can we find more of those Charms and Allures which make the principal Merit of Verse? His Prose is full of them; insomuch, that by the Ancients he is blam'd for a too poetical Style; and is for that Reason called by them the *Homer of Philosophers*; and as it was said of him, that none ever declaim'd with greater Eloquence against Eloquence; we may likewise say, that never did one write more poetically against Poetry. It is therefore indisputable, that *Plato* had it in his View, as much and more than any other Writer, to please the Imagination: But in this he did nothing but what was praise-worthy; for he had a farther Aim, and only made use of that Faculty as a Key to the Heart. Let not him then condemn a Method of instructing, of which he thought he himself might allowably take advantage: But let him permit to others what he imagined to be permitted to him.

The second Article of his Charge against Poetry is, That it bestirs the Passions. But who knows not, that it is not a Fault to move them? It is, on the contrary, a good Service to move them towards their proper Objects. Philosophy seems to have proposed the Extirpation of them; but all its Efforts to this Effect have been abortive. A Dispassionate Man is a meer Chimæra. As the human Mind is fram'd, it of Necessity must love and hate, hope and fear, admire and be disquieted. Poetry therefore acting more wisely, in this Respect, than Philosophy, set about regulating what it could not annihilate or destroy. Observing that it could not divest us of Sentiments and Passions inseparable from our Being,



Being, it endeavours to direct them into the Course they ought to take, and to keep them in due Order. It employs all its Art and Power to strengthen in us the Love of Good, and the Hatred of Evil; to fill us with Admiration of virtuous Actions, and with Indignation against wicked ones; to enliven our Hopes, by representing Virtue to us as always recompensed; and our Fears, by setting before us the just Punishment Vice never escapes.

Finally, he blames Poetry, because it is an Imitation. This seems to be the Foundation of his whole Charge. He insists upon this as the strongest Argument against it: But I do not fear to assert, that this is not the most intelligible of his Reasons. For what would the great Philosopher be at? Does he imagine all Imitation blameable or vicious? Why may not Imitation have the Degree of Perfection belonging to it, be employed to a good End, and produce good Effects? And we may maintain, that Poetry is an Imitation of this Kind. Let *Plato* tell us what we ought to think of his own Dialogues: Are they not Imitations, which represent to the Life those learned and polite Conferences, in which Men of Knowledge dispute one with another, and unite their several Lights for the Discovery of Truth? What is there bad in such Pictures?

And to what indeed are we reduced, if all is cut off, which *Plato* comprehends under the Word *Imitation*? If he puts all the Arts in general under that Class; all the Arts which serve to polish the human Mind; such as Eloquence, Poetry, History, Grammar; those which have innocent Pleasure and Relaxation for their Scope; as Painting, Sculpture, Musick, Dancing; nay, those which are most necessary to human Life,

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as Agriculture, Navigation, Architecture: Would he have them all proscribed from all well-govern'd States? It would indeed be a very strange Republick, from which all he calls *Imitation* should be exiled. According to this Philosopher's System, every thing that exists in Nature must be abolished: For upon his Principles, all the different Parts which compose the Universe, are, to speak properly, but Imitations or Copies after the eternal Ideas, which served in the Production of Things for Models to the divine Architect. Let us not hesitate to affirm, that such a Republick as *Plato* hath imagined is but an ideal one. While Men are not pure Spirits; while they have Bodies, Imagination and Senses, something must be allowed to Sense and Imagination. All that can be demanded of them is, that they make no bad Use of these Faculties; to desire that they should utterly detach themselves from their Bodies, and think and act as if they had none, is to require of them Efforts contrary to the Intention of Nature; it is to set before them a Degree of Perfection to which their Constitution does not allow them to reach. Let us therefore say of *Plato*, what he says of *Homer* when he criticises him. He protests, *That though he had been bred up from his Infancy in the Admiration of this great Poet, yet he could not approve his Works; because, says he, one ought to pay more Regard to Truth than to any Man.* Let us apply these Words to *Plato*. Tho' great Veneration be due to that vast Genius, who is an Honour to Humanity; tho' one cannot but admire, with sincere Respect, the Excellence, the Sublimity of his Doctrine, yet one cannot be of his Sentiment with regard to Poetry; because, notwithstanding all

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the Deference we owe to *Plato*, we owe still more to Truth,

MAY I attempt to comprize all I have been endeavouring to prove in this too long Dissertation? I have been essaying to shew, that the following Truths cannot be controverted by any impartial Considerer: That Poetry in itself, for its Origin, is a Divine Art: That it proposes to itself the best of Ends, which is to instruct Mankind in an agreeable, amusing Manner, and to mingle the Profitable with the Pleasant: That in fact, the most renowned Poets have had that Scope in their View: That some in Pieces purely moral, have directly and plainly taught the sublimest Virtue: And that others under pleasing Fictions and agreeable Allegories have couched the most important and useful Truths: That it must be acknowledged some have departed from this noble Design; and, abusing their Fancy and Wit, have composed Works, which it were to be wished had never had a Being: But that it would be injurious to condemn all Poetry on that Account: It would be to confound the Art itself with the Corruption and Abuse of it, and to impute that to Poetry, which ought only to be imputed to Poets.





*A DISCOURSE upon the Utility of  
Imitation, and the Manner in  
which an Author ought to imi-  
tate; serving to illustrate the  
Nature and Origin of Poetry.*

*By Mr. RACINE.\**

*Read to the French Academy, March 5th, 1720.*

**M**EN have a natural Propension to imitate whatever they admire: Infants, prompted by this secret Instinct, take Pleasure in mimicking the Movements and Gestures of those about them; they try to form the Sounds they hear, and thus they learn to speak. By the Habitude of imitating whatever strikes our Fancy, our Manners are gradually formed: We are thus moulded into the Form and Semblance of those with whom we are most conversant. Example makes a much stronger Impression upon us than Precept, either because it works upon our Senses, whereas the other is barely addressed to our Reason; or because, it at the same time shews us both the Practicability of the Precept, and the Glory of the

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\* *Memoirs of Literature, Tom. 6. p. 733.*

the Execution. The Labours of others reproach our Indolence: The Victories of *Miltiades* disturbed the Rest of *Themistocles*: The Statue of *Alexander* made *Cæsar* weep, when he reflected upon the superior Glory of the Hero whose Image it was: This noble Emulation, the Mother of all the great Virtues, formed the military Heroes, and yet forms those who merit Renown in the Empire of Letters.

I OWN, there are some, who look upon Imitation as a Species of Servitude; pretending, that it stifles the Vigour of Nature, and cramps Genius: But they who reason in this Manner, attack the Faults of Imitation rather than the Thing itself; and I don't despair of shewing, that the Advantages redounding from Imitation, far from enfeebling, contribute not a little to improve and strengthen natural Genius.

THE Ruins of ancient *Rome*, the mutilated Remains of Statues dug up in the last Centuries, revived the Taste and Love of the ingenious Arts. Sculpture, Architecture, and Painting, sprung up from those precious Remains: To Imitation of the Antique we owe a *Raphael* and a *Michael Angelo*. And Learning returned to the World in the same Manner: So soon as the Works of the Ancients were rescued from the Dust of Cloisters under which they had long lain buried, and we began to read them, Minds, which were quite asleep, were gradually awakened by reading the Sentiments of others: Men recovered the Habit of Thinking, which they had lost; and at the same time learned to develop and express their Thoughts: And after having been a long while Disciples, we, at last, came to vie with our Masters, and were enabled by them in some things to surpass them. 'Tis to Imitation

tion we are beholden for our Glory; and 'tis from hence likewise, that the Ancients deriv'd theirs. *We see, says Longinus, that Herodote, and before him Stesichorus and Archilochus, had been great Imitators of Homer: But it is Plato who has most remarkably imitated him: This is the Fountain from which he principally drew: That great Philosopher had never arriv'd at such a Pitch of Sublimity in his philosophical Treatises, had he not come forth as a new Combatant, to dispute the Prize with Homer; that is, with one who had already received universal Applause. Longinus might have added, that Plato served as a Model to Cicero; and he might likewise have ranked Virgil among the Copiers of Homer.*

It is, perhaps, imprudent in me to mention Homer; and what *Velleius Paterculus* says of him, will probably be objected to my Argument, *viz. That there was none before Homer for him to copy after; nor hath any one succeeded him, who hath been able to imitate him. Homer, it may be said by some, without the Help of any Model to imitate, became inimitable, by the unassisted Force of natural Genius and Abilities.*

I SHALL reply to this, in the first Place, that we are not sure that *Homer* † did not imitate: We know the Names of several Poets who flourished before him; and we have no ground to doubt but there were many others whose Names and Works time hath obliterated. Had *Homer* been the first, could he possibly have carried Poetry all at once to Perfection? All the Arts and Sciences have a quite different Destiny: Their Birth and their Maturity keep a greater Distance the one from the other. In the second Place,

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tho'

† It may not be improper to remark here, that this is *Cicero's* Argument; and, to refer to the Place, see *de claris oratoribus, sive Brutus*, No. 10. and No. 18.



tho' it should be granted that *Homer* had no Model to imitate, yet that Example will not destroy what I am contending for, the Advantage of Imitation: I have an Instance at hand to oppose to it. *Virgil* every where imitates; sometimes he follows *Homer*, sometimes *Theocritus*; on other Occasions *Hesiod*, and sometimes later Poets; and it is by having taken so many Models for his Imitation, that he became himself a Pattern worthy of being imitated by all Poets. In a word, I do not pretend to assert the indispensable Necessity of Imitation: It may happen, that some peculiar Favourites of Heaven may be able to strike out to themselves a new and unbeaten Road, and to march without any Guide; but such Examples are rare; they are indeed Prodigies.

In Reality, according to the more ordinary Course of Nature, the most happy Genius stands in need of Succour and Aid to support and nourish it: It does not find all it wants within itself. The best Plant requires Manure; the richest Soil demands foreign Supplies: And in like Manner, the Soul does not conceive or bring forth any truly masculine and generous Production, if it has not been watered and fructified by a plentiful Source of Literature and good Education. All our Efforts are abortive without the Gifts of Nature; but our Efforts remain imperfect, if these Gifts of Nature are not cultivated by Art. It is Imitation which perfects them: Our unassisted Genius is unable to satisfy all our Desires; it soon exhausts itself, and becomes cold and languid; nay, it soon ceases to think: But one Moment's reading revives a languishing Imagination, and recruits it with new Ideas, with fresh Vigour; or the Imagination seizes the Sentiments

it receives from others, and enlarges and improves them, and gives them quite a new Form; inso-much that one is tempted to say, the Spirit of the Author transmigrates into us. *There are many Persons, says Longinus, whom the Spirit of another transports beyond themselves. As it is said, that a holy Fury seized the Priestests of Apollo upon the sacred Tripod; so those surprizing Beauties we remark in the Writings of the Ancients, are, as it were, so many sacred Sources, whence ascend happy Exhalations, which diffusing themselves thro' the Souls of their Imitators, inflame even the coldest Breasts; so that they are at that Moment as it were set on fire, and ravished by the Entbusiasm of another.*

SUCH were the Sentiments of the Ancients with Regard to Imitation. The famous *Crassus*, who is one of the Interlocutors in *Cicero's* Dialogue concerning an Orator, gives it as a most important Precept, to take care to chuse a right Pattern: *Hoc sit primum in præceptis meis, ut demonstremus quem imitemur.* "This shall be the first and chief of my Instructions, to shew what Model we ought to imitate."

THE three Books which *Dionysius Halicarnassæus* wrote upon Imitation are lost; but there is an excellent Chapter in *Quintilian*, where he lays down most judicious Rules upon this Subject.

AND all our best Writers have carefully observed these Precepts. In reading *Malherbe*, *Racan*, *Fontaine*, *Moliere*, *M. Despreaux*, and *M. Racine*, we find the Spirit of *Rome* and *Athens* revived. The Fire of the Ancients hath passed into their Compositions, and burns in them with a more lively Ardour. *Corneille* is, perhaps, the only one who neglected that Assistance; and indeed, Imitation sometimes did him

Diservice. This surprizing Genius seems to owe nothing in his masterly Works to any Person : He was not made to march in any other's Steps : He has succeeded worse in the Subjects he took from the Ancients, than in those of his own Invention ; far from equalling *Sophocles* and *Euripides* in the *Oedipus* and the *Miden*, he has in these Pieces fallen far short of himself. He had before his Eyes two of the best Models ; for the *Miden* is one of the best Tragedies of *Euripides*, and *Oedipus* hath always been esteemed by good Judges the Master-piece of the ancient Theatre. *Corneille* hath overlook'd a great Number of fine Strokes in these Pieces, which were capable of charming in any Language : Yet, on account of numberless Beauties absolutely his own, he will always be esteemed one of the greatest Heroes of our Stage : His Example, therefore, seems to contradict what I have asserted of Imitation. I could perhaps remove this Difficulty, durst I adventure to criticise *Corneille* : One thing I cannot chuse but say ; which is, that the Faults of which this great Man is accused, who is generally acknowledged by the Publick not to have been always equal to himself, prove what I have advanced, even that the happiest Genius stands in Need of Imitation to support it.

HITHERTO I have only pleaded in general for the Utility of Imitation : But it is not enough to be convinced of this ; we ought likewise to understand the Rules which should be observed in imitating, in order to gain the Advantages we may receive from right Imitation.

THE first Thing then is to chuse a right Model : But bad Guides being far superior in number to good ones, it requires great Prudence to chuse



chuse well: There is more Danger than we are aware, of being misled. Sometimes an Author of a middling Genius, but full of sparkling Sentences, seduces us, and gets a very fatal Ascendant over our Judgment: His false Lights dazzle our Eyes: We follow them; they mislead us. How much has *Seneca* contributed to corrupt the Taste of Readers? *Quintilian* remarks, "That in his Time, the Youth had almost no other Book in their Hands; an Author so much the more pernicious, that he abounds with enchanting Faults:" *Quod abundat dulcibus vitiis*. *Seneca* and *Pliny* the younger have not been less hurtful to the Youth of the present Age: Some of our Writers have been ambitious of imitating those two Authors, and they have but too well succeeded. *Lucan* has likewise misled very many; and his Translator, who has found the Secret of surpassing him in Bombast, was seduced by the foolish Emulation of rivaling them in the Glory of a swoln Style. It has been observed by some Criticks, that *Lucan* had in a great Measure spoilt *Corneille's* great Qualities: And indeed *Corneille*, in his Tragedy of *Pompey*, seems to have contended with a Poet who deserved not the Honour of such a Competitor: The Ambition of rising higher than *Lucan*, hath made him soar far above the true Sublime, which was however familiar and natural to him.

LET us learn by these Examples to set a good Pattern before us: But when we have found such a one, let us not attach ourselves so entirely to it, as to be guided by it alone, and to overlook all others: We ought, like the diligent Bee, to gather from every Flower. *Quintilian* advises us to snatch every where what.

whatever we can find that is truly good. *Demosthenes*, says he, *is the most perfect of the Greek Orators: But another, on some Occasions, has spoke better than he. Demosthenes hath an infinite Number of Beauties: But the Author who is the worst of Imitation is not the only one to be imitated. Zeuxis* made an admirable Picture of *Helen*, by picking and chusing from several fine Originals: And a Writer ought to collect from every Quarter what suits him: In the most indifferent ones he may find something to enrich his Booty: For nothing is useles to him who knows how to make Advantage of every thing. *Virgil* found Gold amidst the Rubbish of *Ennius*; and he who painted *Phædra* after *Euripides*, gave new Features to his Piece, for which he was indebted to *Seneca*.

IF Discernment be requisite in chusing a good Model, it is yet more so in chusing the Parts in this Model which ought to be imitated. One should maintain a sort of Diffidence about those Authors we esteem most. The greatest Men are not always exempt from great Faults; and their Errors easily seduce us, because we are disposed to imitate the Persons we admire, in every thing; even as Infants, accustomed to approve whatever their Fathers do, are easily corrupted by their bad Example.

—————*magnis*  
*Cum subeant animos auctoribus.*

JUVEN.

IT is impossible to find a Guide that may not sometimes mislead us: And it is very difficult for us to discern when he, whom we have taken for our Guide, leads us wrong: The Respect we  
have

have for him blinds us : His many Virtues hinder us from discovering his Imperfections ; and therefore *Horace* warns us,

*Decepit exemplar vitiis imitabile.*

WE often see little Genius's who imagine themselves equal to certain great Men, because they resemble them in their Faults : *Se abunde similes putant, si vitia magnorum con- Quint. sequantur.* *Quintilian* speaks of several Writers, who by curtailing their Phrases and rendering them obscure, boasted of being like to *Sallust* and *Thucydides* : He likewise mentions some Orators who thought they imitated *Cicero* by their long verbose Periods, and imagined they had quite hit his Style, if they ended their Sentences with *esse videatur.* *Martial* rallying a bad Poet, to console him, says pleasantly enough, *That if he made bad Verses, he was so far like to Cicero :*

*Quodque malos versus, hoc Ciceronis habes.*

LET us only affect an honourable Resemblance to great Men : Let us form ourselves upon their Beauties only ; and when we imitate them, let us do it in a noble and generous Manner, and with perfect Freedom.

To copy an Author, to transplant his Thoughts Word for Word, to follow him servilely, belongs to them who are able to produce nothing of their own : Such Imitation is Robbery : It is dressing ourselves in another's Cloaths, and unlawfully to detain another's Goods for our own. Many *Latin* Poets of the preceding Century have imagined themselves upon the Top of *Parnassus*,  
for



for having pieced together Verses from *Virgil* and *Horace*. I could cite some learned Men, who by this Artifice have composed *Greek, Latin, French* and *Italian* Poems, without being Poets in any Language. The Commonwealth of Letters ought to adopt, with regard to this Crime, the *Lacedemonian* Law, which pardoned Theft done with Address, but severely punished Thieves, who, by their Want of Subtlety, suffered themselves to be found out in their Robberies. *Cassius Severus* compared Plagiaries to those, who having stolen Plate, changed the Mark, and sold it for their own. To such we may apply the Reproach in *Horace*,

*O imitatores, servum pecus !*

and those Verses in *Fontaine*,

*Quelques imitateurs, sot bestial, je l'avoue,  
Suivent en vrais moutons le pasteur de martoue.*

GOOD Imitation is a continued Invention. One ought to transform himself, so to speak, into his Model ; to embellish his Thoughts, and to appropriate them by the new Turn he gives them ; to enrich what one borrows, and to leave to the Author whatever we cannot make better. In this Manner did *Fontaine* imitate, as he himself tells us:

*Vrais imitateurs n'est point un esclavage.*

I ONLY take the Idea and the Turn according to the Rules which our Masters themselves followed :

*Si d'ailleurs quelque endroit plein chez eux d'ex-  
cellence*

*Peut entrer dans mes vers sans nulle violence,  
Je l'y transporte, & veux qu'il n'ait rien d'affecté,  
Tachant de rendre mien cet air d'antiquité.*

WE must not translate our Original, says Despreaux, but contend with him. One ought to combat incessantly with the Author he imitates, and strive to excel him. *It is,* says Longinus, *a Contention worthy of a noble Soul, to combat for Honour and Victory with those who have gone before us, since in such Battles one may be vanquished without Shame.* He who aims at surpassing his Model, if he do not excel him, he may at least equal him. *Qui agit ut prior sit, forsitan etiam si non transferit, æquabit.* But he who does not think of outstripping, but of following, will lag behind.

IF our famous Painters had satisfied themselves with barely copying the ancient Remains, Painting had never been brought to Perfection. The first Inventors have opened the Way to us; they lose nothing of their Glory, if those who come after them carry the Art to a greater Perfection. If *Virgil* had not dared to out-do *Homer*, we had not had from him that glorious Description of *Æneas's* Descent into Hell, nor that admirable Shield of *Æneas*. And who will say, that *Virgil* is not the Author of these beautiful Pieces, tho' another had furnish'd him with the Idea?

*MALHERBE* teaches how, or by what Art one may improve the Sentiment of another; Every one admires this Passage of *Horace*:

*Pallida*

*Pallida mors æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas  
Regumque turre.*

BUT do we not equally admire the Image under which *Malherbe* represents the same Thought?

*Le pauvre en sa cabane, on la chaume le coudre,  
Est sujet a ses loix :  
Et la garde, qui veille aux barriers du Louvre,  
N' on deffend pas nos rois.*

SOPHOCLES puts these Words into the Mouth of the unhappy *Ajax*, when at the Point of Death he meets his Son:

Ω παῖ, γένοιό πατρός εὐτ' ἐχέστερος  
Τὰ δ' ἄλλ' ὅμοιος.

VIRGIL says the same Thing in a different Manner:

*Disce, puer, virtutem ex me verumque laborem,  
Fortunam ex aliis.*

AND we have the same Sentiment expressed yet differently in *Andromaque*:

*Treis connoitre à mon fils les heros de sa race  
Autant que tu pourras conduis-le, sur leur trace,  
Dis luy par quels exploits leurs noms ont éclaté,  
Plustost ce qu'ils ont fait, que ce qu'ils ont esté.*

MR. Despreaux, who said pleasantly of himself, *That he was but a Beggar dressed with the Spoils of Horace*; so enriched himself with those Spoils,



Spoils, that he made a Treasure of them which was truly his own. Tho' he found in the Ancients all the Precepts of Poetry, yet he hath ranged them into so fine an Order, and hath adorned them with so many new Graces, that he may be called the Inventor. Almost all the Arguments of his Satires are borrowed, yet he hath deserved this Encomium, that in all his Imitations he is ever an Original.

I CANNOT dispense with quoting another Example from amongst our Poets: And as I own ingenuously the Beauties for which he is indebted to the Ancients, I have a Right to demand it may be allowed to me likewise to affirm he hath added many Beauties to them; and if I sometimes set him above them, yet be assured, that my Concern and Interest in his Glory, and the Sentiments of natural Affection, do not prevail over the Respect I bear to his Masters. The constant Approbation *Iphigenia* hath received upon the *French* Theatre obliges me to conclude, that this Tragedy may be reckoned one of the best that was ever wrote: And when I compare this Piece with one of the same Title, which was the Delight of the *Athenian* Stage, then I learn how one ought to imitate the Ancients. *Euripides* gives *Iphigenia* two different Characters, according to the Censure of *Aristotle*. When that young Princess learns that she is to be sacrificed, she throws herself immediately at her Father's Knees, all in Tears, and begs him not to bring her to an untimely Death, because the Light of Life is sweet. In the Conclusion of her Supplication she repeats the same Words: *Men love to see the Light; no Person is curious to see what passes in the infernal Regions; to wish for Death is Folly. It is better to live shamefully,*  
than

*than to die with Glory.* Then she throws out the most hideous Cries, and complains that she perishes by the injurious, murdering Hands of a cruel Father: A Moment after she changes Sentiments, and is ravished to sacrifice her Life to the publick Good of her Country; she excuses her Father, and conjures *Clytemnestra* not to hate *Agamemnon* on her Account. These last Sentiments furnish the Author of the modern *Ephigenia* with the admirable Character of an ever dutiful and respectful Daughter, entirely resigned to the Will of her Father; and this lovely Character is preserved throughout the whole Piece.

SEE then, in what Manner Imitation nourishes and perfectionates the Talents one receives from Nature. I dare even adventure to say, that it in some Measure supplies the Want of Genius. I have already said after *Longinus*, that the Fire of the Ancients is capable of stirring and warming the most languid Spirits: In fact, intimate Acquaintance with good Authors gives Taste, opens the Imaginations, and forms Style. One born without Talents, after a long Commerce with the best Masters, acquires some Resemblance to them, and communicates it to his Works; like that Peasant of whom *Dionysius Hallicarnassens* speaks upon this Subject, who being very ugly, and fearing lest his Children should inherit his Deformity, kept beautiful Pictures before his Wife while she was with Child; and the Sight of them procured a Beauty to his Children, which they could not have from their Father.

BUT I foresee an Objection that will be brought against all I have said upon the Utility of Imitation, and the best Manner of practising it. In order to succeed, some will tell me, we have  
nothing

nothing to do but to copy after Nature; 'tis true, the Ancients have represented it very well; but they are only Copies. Why then seek for Nature in their Works? She is always present to our Eyes; and it is the Original alone we need to study. One who would paint a fine Landſkip, inſtead of imitating thoſe of the beſt Painters, ought only to look at thoſe which Nature offers to his View.

I reply to this Objection by an Example from the Art of Painting. *Reubens*, and the beſt Maſters of the *Flemiſh* School, ſet themſelves ſolely to copy Nature: *Raphael*, and the Maſters of the *Roman* School, join'd with the Study of Nature the Aſſiſtance of the Antique; and the latter brought their Art to a Sublimity and Elegance, to which the *Flemiſh* could never approach; becauſe it is not ſufficient to ſtudy and imitate Nature; ſhe muſt be imitated with Taſte and Diſcernment. Nature, I own, exhibits to us the Truth; but ſhe does not teach us to chuſe the beſt, the moſt excellent: It is Art which directs us how to make that happy Choice; and it is in the Ancients alone we find the Models of this neceſſary Taſte, which raiſes the great Poets, and likewise the great Painters, ſo far above others.

Let us not then bluſh, attentively to conſult all thoſe who have ſtudied Nature before us, and have well underſtood it. We have a great Number of able Guides, all ready to aſſiſt and conduct us: Every thing conſpires to animate us; no Age is more favourable than our's to Study and Improvements: All our Predeceſſors have laboured for our Inſtruction and Benefit. Antiquity offers us its Models: This laſt Age furniſhes us with new ones, worthy of the Ancients. Tho' both be our Maſters, let us not ſatisfy ourſelves with being mere Scholars; let us con-



sider them at the same Time, as Models we ought to imitate, and as Rivals we ought to outdo. The Race they ran with Glory is open to us: We may come up with them, and perhaps surpass them. The huge Distance we see between them and us should not intimidate us: We have more Way to make, but we have more Assistance, and that is owing to our Predecessors; in fine, if we do not equal them, we may at least come near to them; and the Places next to these great Personages are honourable. *Ut transeundi spes non sit magna, tamen est dignitas subsequendi.* “If there be no great Hopes of excelling them; yet the Glory of following “is very considerable:” And as *Quintilian*, who says this, adds, *He who in War could not attain to the Glory of Achilles, ought to be pleased he obtained that of Ajax or of Diomedes.* Above all, let us not be discouraged: The Reputation of a *Lucretius* did not hinder *Virgil* from appearing; the Fame of *Hortensius* did not abate, but inflame the Ardor of a *Tully*. Who was more capable of discouraging his Rivals than *Cornèille*? Yet he hath found his Equal; and tho’ another hath deserved the same Crown, his is entire, and has lost nothing of its Lustre.



# *A DISCOURSE concerning the* **ESSENCE of POETRY.**

*By Mr. RACINE.*

*Read to the French Academy, 22d April, 1721. \**

## P A R T I.

**I**T is not surprising to find so great Honours paid to Poetry in the earliest Ages of the World, and in the most barbarous Nations. Our natural Love of Pleasure makes us earnestly seek after whatever may contribute to gratify our Senses, move our Affections agreeably, or yield any Satisfaction to our Mind; and it is by this means Poets have found an infallible Secret for pleasing us: At the same Time that they charm our Ears by the harmonious Cadence of Verse, sometimes they communicate to our Hearts those warm Emotions and sublime Transports with which they themselves are

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deeply

\* *Memoirs of Literature*, T. 6. p. 245.

deeply penetrated; sometimes they delight our Understanding and Imagination by a faithful Imitation of Nature, often more agreeable than the real Presence of the imitated Objects ; and sometimes they awaken and satisfy our natural Curiosity by amusing Fictions.

Verfication, Imitation, Fiction, and Enthusiasm, are the principal Springs by which Poetry moves and entertains us. But as she does not always employ all of them at once, we are now to enquire which of them she always employs, and cannot dispense with ; wherein that secret Charm consists, which constitutes her peculiar Beauty and Power ; what that particular Character is, which essentially distinguishes her from Prose, and belongs to her alone.

Tho' Verfication be always necessary, and tho' the Name of a Poet be commonly given to every one who makes Verses ; yet we know that illustrious Title is not so easy a Purchase. The Art of ranging Words according to a certain Measure, has nothing great or admirable in it : However severe a Confinement the Rules of Verfication may be, there is no great Merit in being able to keep to them : A very ordinary Genius easily habituates himself to these Fetters : The most sublime Poet likewise submits to them, because the Laws of his Art must be obeyed : But it is not in those Laws, which are different in different Languages, that the true Beauty of Poetry lies, which is the same in all Languages.

— *neque enim concludere versum  
Dixeris esse satis.*

HOR.

I shall



I shall not stay long to prove, that Imitation is not essential to Poetry, since every one is persuaded it is not. Comedy is an Imitation of human Passions and Actions; but not having Force or Sublimity, many have refused it the Name of a Poem, as *Horace* tells us.

— *Quod acer spiritus ac vis  
Nec verbis, nec rebus inest; nisi quod pede certo  
Differt sermoni sermo merus.*

The elevated Language of *Plato* and *Demosthenes*, made their Style to be looked upon by many as nearer to Poetry than that of Comedy, in which there is nothing different from common Discourse, Versification alone excepted. So *Cicero* informs us (a).

I shall endeavour to shew, that Fiction is not essential to Poetry: And here I must take some Pains to combat an Opinion which is supported by several learned Men, for whom I have a very high Regard, tho' their Arguments on this Subject do not convince me. They imagining Fable to be inseparable from Poetry, place those whose Works are not animated by the Presence of some feigned Personage, or some allegorical Divinity, amongst the Versifiers only. A Poet, say they, ought always to create: The Name signifies a Creator; and therefore to answer their Profession, and to create, they ought to leave Precepts to Philosophers, and Facts to Historians, and to invent some agreeable Lie, under which they can veil some useful Truth: Without this none merits to be called Poet; and *Virgil* himself would never have obtain'd that Name, had he confin'd his Labours to his four Books of *Georgics*.

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(a) *Cicero* Orat.

Those who reason in this Manner are at no Loss to find several ancient Authorities for supporting their Opinion. They cite the Example and Words of *Socrates*. This grave Philosopher, in his last Conversation with his Friends, the Day he was to die a Martyr for Truth, tells them, that in Obedience to certain Divine Inspirations, which commanded him to apply himself to Musick, he had composed in Prison Verses in Honour of God : And afterwards, that being perswaded, one, in Order to be a Poet, must compose, not Reasonings but Fables, he had put those of (b) *Æsop* into Verse, because he was not capable of inventing new ones. *Plutarch*, after quoting these Words of *Socrates*, throws *Empedocles*, *Parmenides*, *Nicander*, and *Theognis*, out of the Number of Poets ; *because*, says he, *we know there may be Sacrifices without Musick and Dancing ; but there can be no Poetry without Fables and Lies*. *Castelvetro*, who has acquir'd some Reputation by his Commentary upon *Aristotle's* Art of Poetry, and who in his bold Decisions often shews more Subtilty than Solidity, pretends that the *Georgics* of *Virgil* do not merit the Name of a Poet to their Author ; and that *Physiology* can never be the Subject of Poetry ; *which* (c), saith he, *was invented not to instruct, but barely to amuse and entertain the gross Minds of the ignorant Multitude*.

One does but little Honour to his own Judgment, and to his Labour, who thus vilifies an Art he had studied so much, and the Rules of which he had taken the Trouble to describe and explain at great Length.

Poetry,

(b) Plato in *Phædro*.

(c) Per dilettae e recreare g'i animi della rozza moltitudine. p. 29.

Poetry, notwithstanding all its Charms, would be of very little Value, were Amusement its only Aim. He who possesses the Talent of Versification, far from having it in his View merely to divert the Publick, (a low shameful Employment, always despised even by those for whose Amusement it is intended) proposes to be really useful.

*Lectorem delectando, pariterque monendo.*

H O R.

And upon whatever Subject he writes, he ought always *jucunda & idonea dicere vitæ*; to say Things that are as instructive as pleasant. *Castelvetro* should have reflected, that *Aristotle*, upon whom he comments, would never have put so high a Value upon Poetry, if he had not thought it an Art of real Usefulness; and that all the Rules this great Philosopher lays down for Tragedy, Comedy, and Epic Poetry have no other End but to render them more proper for correcting and amending our Manners.

Such was the noble Design of Poetry at its Origin; it was applied to inspire into Men the Dread of Vice, the Love of Virtue, and Reverence to Providence; and it was its close Alliance with Religion at its Rise, which made it so fond of Fables: Religion being then all the World over, except among the *Hebrews*, sadly corrupted by the Fables intermingled with it. Poetry had the same Fate; and while among the People of God, it remained always pure and faithful to Truth; in all other Nations it made use of Fiction with so much the greater Zeal, that Fable then held the Place of Truth.



All the Absurdities of the Pagan Theology, so rever'd by the People for their Antiquity, were no less venerable to the Poets, who being bred among a People infected with Error, early suck'd in that contagious Air, and with blinded Devotion compos'd Hymns to the Praise of the false Gods, whose Worship they found establish'd. For it is an insupportable Assertion, to pretend that *Orpheus*, *Hesiod* and *Homer* were the Inventors of the ancient Mythology ; it is ridiculous to say, that the fabulous Divinities were first formed in the Brains of Poets : If they themselves had claimed the detestable Honour of having corrupted Mankind to such a Degree, it would still have been easy to have refuted them.

All these Fables are so ancient, that it is almost impossible to trace them to their Nativity ; and we are constrained to acknowledge, to the Reproach of our Reason, that the Birth of Idolatry soon followed that of the World. Man no sooner came out of the Hands of God, than he forgot the invisible Being who formed him ; and, struck with the Admiration of visible Objects only, early paid Worship even to formless Blocks, without waiting till Sculpture had given them Shape and Beauty. The Adoration of dead Heroes soon follow'd : *Osiris* King of *Egypt* built a superbe Temple to his Father *Jupiter* and his Mother *Junon* : And it is known, that the *Egyptians*, after having worshipp'd the Stars and Men, at last prostrated themselves before Brute Animals, in Consequence of their Faith in an ancient Tradition, that the Gods, pursued by Giants, had taken shelter in their Country, and had been forced to hide themselves there in the Figures of Animals.

Superstitious *Egypt*, the Mother of Fables, soon spread them over the whole Globe: But when they came into *Greece*, there they found so favourable a Climate, that they were no sooner transplanted into it, than they got new Vigour. *Herodot* acknowledges, that the *Greeks* got their Knowledge of the twelve great Gods from the *Egyptians*. A Religion which had no other Foundation but some Facts obscured by a Mixture of numberless Falshoods, daily acquired fresh Force in passing from one Country to another; as Fame, which going from Mouth to Mouth, adds incessantly Lie to Lie.

——— *Quæ veris addere falsa  
Gaudet, Et è minimo sua per mendacia crescit.*

OVID.

Thus was the System of Pagan Theology very speedily increased to a most enormous Size, so soon as it came into the Hands of the *Greeks*, naturally a lying Race. It became the Mode amongst Men to make Gods: All the Heroes, who had performed any remarkable Atchievements, went to Heaven at their Death, to demand Divine Honours; and every Day *Jupiter's* Table received some new Guest. Even the Sea had its Gods and Goddesses: Every River had its Divinity; every Fountain its Nymph; the Trees, the Woods and Mountains likewise had theirs assigned to them: And the Muses set themselves down upon *Parnassus*, and plac'd *Apollo* at their Head. *Orpheus*, who by the Harmony of his Lyre tamed the savage Ferocity of the first Inhabitants of *Greece*, had Power enough to draw them from their gloomy Habitation in Forests, and to make them desert Acorns, their first

first homely Fare ; but far from taking them off from the Love of the Fables in which they delighted, he rather increased it, having stuffed himself with them in his Travels thro' *Egypt*, according to *Diodorus Siculus*. *Museus* and *Linus* followed his Example: They gave additional Authority to the prevailing Fables, by embellishing them with their Verses, and laying them over with new Colours, *For the Poets*, says *Lactantius*, *did not invent Things, but gave a fine Colouring to received Opinions*. In the Comedy of *Aristophanes*, called, *The Frogs*, *Eschylus* reproaches *Euripides* for having presented upon the Theatre such dangerous Characters as those of *Phedra* and *Stenobia*. *What*, replies *Euripides*, *Am I the Inventor of these Personages ?* *No*, says *Eschylus*, *their Adventures were known before ; but a Poet, whose Business it is to instruct, ought not to publish Histories, the Recital of which may have a pernicious Influence*. According to this Maxim we must condemn *Homer* and *Hesiod* for all they have said of the Gods. *Pythagoras* (d) affirmed, that they are punished in the other World for it ; and that in his Voyage into it he had seen the Soul of *Hesiod* tied to a Pillar, with Chains of Brass ; and *Homer's* hung to a Tree, and environ'd with Serpents. Yet these Poets ought not to be punished as the Inventors of Fables ; they were only culpable for having adorned such Fables as ow'd their Rise to vulgar Ignorance.

*Hesiod*, to honour the Gods of his Country, hath gathered together their pretended Titles to Divinity, and endeavoured to clear up their obscure Genealogy.

*Homer*

(d) *Diod. Siculus*.



*Homer* has embellished his Poems with their various Adventures; and perhaps he may have added some Circumstances: But he had the more Liberty to do so, that any thing would appear probable in describing of Gods with our Features, our Frailties and Passions.

*Greece* communicated to *Italy* the Fables she had received from *Egypt*: They came thither under the venerable Appearance of Truth; and *Rome* compos'd its Religion of them in its Infancy. *Numa* encouraged the Poets to consecrate their first Labours to religious Uses. *Without the Hymns of the Salians, how would the Youth, says Horace, have known to pray to the Gods?*

*Disceret unde preces, vatem ni musa dedisset?*

Thus, therefore, the Poets of all Nations, far from thinking of nothing but diverting the People with Tales, at first directed their Poems to the Service of the established Religion, and afterwards betook themselves to History and Morality.

The *Romans*, in the first Ages of that State, at their Festivals sung the heroic Exploits of great Men, that they might excite the Youth to imitate such noble Patterns. *Quo ad ea imitanda juventutem alacriorem redderent* (e).

The Bards, so much rever'd by the *Gauls*, sung, says *Ammianus Marcellinus* (f), Heroic Verses to the Lyre, compos'd in Praise of illustrious Men. Every one knows the Encomium given by *Lucan* to these Poets,

*Vos*

(e) Cicero de claris orat. Val. Max. l. 2. c. 1.

(f) Amm. Marc. l. 15.

*Vos quoque, qui fortes animas, belloque peremptas  
Laudibus in longum vates demittitis ævum,  
Plurima securi fudistis carmina Bardi.*

*Strabo* relates that the *Turdetani*, who passed for the most knowing People in *Spain*, boasted of having had their Laws written in Verse for 6000 Years. The *Germans*, says *Tacitus* (g), had ancient Verses which serv'd them for Annals: The same hath been affirmed of the *Goths* and *Danes* (h); and that Custom prevailed even among the *Americans*, according to the Accounts given of them by the *Spaniards*. Of five classical Books held in great Veneration by the *Chinese* (i), the second is composed of Odes and other Poems, which contain the Principles of Laws and Morals, according to *Confucius*: The third is a Collection of Odes, compos'd, as is said, by *Fohy* himself, whom the *Chinese* regard as their first King: These Odes are very obscure, and *Confucius*, who hath endeavoured to interpret them, makes them all mean moral Precepts, or Lessons in Physicks.

These Examples are sufficient to justify Poetry against the Charge laid against it of dealing only in Falshood and Lies. *From the Beginning of the Art*, says *Horace*, it taught us to invoke the Gods, to moderate our Passions, to abstain from innocent Blood, to obey the Laws, and to be faithful to the Marriage-Vow; and by this Means it merited all the Honours conferr'd upon it.

*Sic honor & nomen divinis vatibus.*

Soon

(g) De moribus German.

(h) Vossius.

(i) Le Pere Couplet.

Soon afterwards Pleasure and Interest made an Alliance with it ; and it was used in paying Court to the Great.

— *Et gratia regum*

*Pieriis tentata modis, ludusque repertus,  
Et longorum operum finis.*

It was then that, degenerating from its original Sanctity, it thought of nothing higher than mere Amusement. Less concerned to instruct than to please, it took Advantage of our Passion for Fable ; and presented us incessantly with new ones, under the specious Pretence of conducting us thereby to Truth, which, unless it be covered over with Fiction, hath a forbidding Aspect ; alledging, that it is necessary to treat us like sick Children, for whom Remedies must be disguised. I am far from blaming so sage an Intention ; but I can by no Means induce my self to think that this Scope hath always been a Restraint upon our Poets ; and I judge from the Example of those who have put the Extravagancies of modern Mythology into Verse.

All the wonderful Adventures wrote by the Archbishop *Turpin* ; those of the famous *Roland*, the new *Achilles*, *Roger Renaud*, the *Fates of King Artus*, the *Knights of the Round Table*. — All that long Train of fabulous Stories, founded upon some real Facts, as well as the ancient Mythology, had no other Source but the credulous Ignorance of the People. When the Northern Nations had overspread the Earth with Barbarity, in that long Eclipse of Letters, Ignorance had brought forth these foolish Reveries, capable of amusing Minds languishing in Darkness. The Poets



Poets afterwards adopted these Visions, and mingling the Truths of Christianity with them, made a most *bizarre Assemblage* of Facts and ridiculous Falshood. Thus one (*Tasso*) represented *Renaud* prostrating himself at the Feet of a Hermit, and humbly confessing to him the Crimes he had committed in the Palace of *Ar-mida* : Another (*Ariosto*) paints *Astolph* to us mounted upon a *Hypogryphe*, pursuing the *Har-pies* to Hell, and travelling thro' the Empire of the Moon, under the Guidance of the Apostle *St. John*. I cannot imagine that *Ariosto*, when he assembled so many Visions together, meant to convey solid Truths under the Veil of Allegories. What useful Reflection can we draw from the Horn, whose dreadful Sound put every one to Flight? From that golden Spear, which overthrows every one it but slightly touches? From the Ring which makes invisible? What Instructions can we learn from the History of the Giant, who, while he fights, gathers up all the Members which are cut off from him, and restores them to their Places? who searches for his Head after it was separated from his Body, and replaces it upon the Neck, pursuing on horseback, with full Speed, the Enemy who had carried it off with him? *Tasso*, more sage in his Fictions, explains to us himself the allegorical Meaning of his Poem; but without that Explication, who would have dream'd, that by the City of *Jerusalem* encompassed with Soldiers, he represents Happiness, which all Men pursue, and which is so difficult to be found? Who could have imagined, that an old Sage, who, notwithstanding his deep Insight into the Secrets of Nature, humbles himself at a Hermit's Feet who had converted him, figures to us haughty Pagan Philosophy submitting it self to Theology,

Theology, after St. *Thomas* had taught it its Subordination? The ancient Poets would really have been Objects of Pity, if they had not been able to teach any Truth without hiding it under such impenetrable Veils. I am far from blaming the Use of Fictions; they furnish us with an easy Method of pleasing Men, and of reprovng their Vices: I even agree with *Fontaine*.

*Le mensonge & les vers furent toujours amis.*

But so far am I from thinking this Alliance necessary, that I take Poetry, when it charms us without borrowing the Features of Falshood, to be so much the more admirable, that it owes nothing to foreign Embellishments, and supports itself by its native intrinsic Beauty.

*Alceus*, who never employ'd feign'd Personages, nor chimerical Adventures, has however merited to have his Lyre called a Lyre of Gold.

*Et te sonantem plenius aureo Alcææ plectro.*

HOR.

And I might add many other Greek and Latin Authors, who having put Subjects of Physiology and Morality into Numbers, have ever been regarded as great Poets. How great is the Renown of *Aratus*! in what high Esteem did Antiquity hold him! I might shew that *Lucrece* had Reason to say of himself, " That enchant-  
" ed by his Love of the Muses, and inspired by  
" them, he had found out unknown Paths, and  
" thence had gathered new Flowers to make a  
" Crown for himself, which no other Mortal had  
" merited.

*Avia*

*Avia Piëridum peragro loca nullius ante  
Trita solo, juvat integros accedere fontes  
Atque haurire, juvatque novos decerpere flores,  
Insignemque meo capiti inde petere coronam,  
Unde prius nulli velarint tempora musæ.*

LUC. l. 6. v. 925.

How easy would it be to display the Sublimity of the *Georgics*; and to prove that *Virgil* with good Reason, hoped for great Renown from this Work, to his Country and his Muse!

*Primus ego in patriam meam, modo vita superfit,  
Aonio rediens deducam vertice musas,  
Primus Idumæas referam tibi, Mantua, palmas.*

Geor. lib. 3. & 10.

But I satisfy myself with observing, that this great Poet, speaking of the fabulous Subjects which he would not treat, calls them Subjects only proper to amuse trivial Minds.

*Cætera quæ vacuas tenuissent carmina mentes.*

Ibidem. & 3.

That inflamed with Love to the Muses, he only demanded from them Instruction in the Secrets of Nature.

*Me vero primum dulces ante omnia musæ,  
Quarum sacra fero ingenti percussus amore,  
Accipiant; cælique vias & sidera monstrent,  
Defectus solis varios, lunæque labores, &c.*

Georg. l. 2. v. 475.

And



And at *Dido's* Feast, tho' he places *Love* at the Feet of the unfortunate Queen, he makes the Physician sing, not soft, tender, amorous *Airs*, or pleasing *Fables*, but the *Marvels* of Nature.

*Hic canit errantem Lunam, Solisque labores :  
Unde hominum genus & pecudes : unde imber &  
Arcturumque, &c.* (ignis

*Æneid. l. i. v. 74.*

I might add to these Proofs many Odes of *Horace*, so justly admired by all the World, which contain nothing but Principles of Morality : But it is needless to have Recourse to Works which may now and then have borrowed some slight Ornaments from Fable, since we have others which Truth alone hath formed and perfected.

What Man of Taste, tho' he had no Veneration for the sacred Writings as such, and should read the Hymns of *Moses*, with the same Eyes and Disposition he reads the Odes of *Pindar*, would not find himself obliged by the Force of Truth to own, that *Moses*, whom we regard as the first Historian, and the first Legislator, was also the first, the sublimest of Poets ? In these Writings Poetry at its Infancy appears already perfect, because God himself inspired the Author ; and the Necessity of arriving at Perfection by gradual Ascent, is a Condition annexed only to Arts of human Invention. The same sublime Spirit of Poetry reigns throughout the Prophets and the Psalms. There shines in all its Majesty that genuine Poetry which excites virtuous Affections only ; which passionately be-

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stirs the Heart, without seducing it ; which pleases us, without making a Handle of our Frailties ; which interests us, without amusing us by ridiculous Tales ; which instructs without disgusting us ; which leads us to the true God, without representing him to us under Images unworthy of his Divinity ; which raises and supports our Admiration, without conducting us from one chimerical Wonder to another ; which is agreeable, and yet always useful ; ennobled by its sublime Expressions, by its animated Figures, and yet more so by the Truths it announces, it alone merits the Name of Divine Language.



PART



## PART II.

**H**AVING shewn in the first Discourse, that Fiction and Fable are not essential to Poetry; and that the Name of a Poet ought not to be lavish'd to every Versifier; it now remains to be enquired who they are who deserve that honourable Title, and to whom it cannot be refused.

The Name, says *Horace*, ought to be given to him alone, who having a Divine Genius, and a sublime Soul, his Mouth utters truly great Sentiments.

*Ingenium cui sit, cui mens diviniore, atque os  
Magna sonaturum, des nominis hujus honorem.*

A Poet, according to *Petronius*, must speak a Language quite remote from that of the Vulgar, insomuch that he hath a Right to cry out, *Aloof, prophane Mob!* “ Sumendæ voces à plebe  
“ summotæ, ut fiat Odi profanum vulgus &  
“ arceo.” The Ancients, struck with Admiration at this Elevation of Poetry, considered it as the Effect of a Fury inspired by the Gods, to



which they gave the Name of *Enthusiasm*.: And therefore *Cicero*, apologizing to his Brother for not having compos'd some Verses he had ask'd of him, says, *He had been hindered by Business; and besides he had not felt the necessary Enthusiasm.* “ *Abest etiam insensibilis.*

We may then, making Use of the same Term, assert, that *Enthusiasm* is the *Essence of Poetry*: But not to content our selves with so vague a Term, we must endeavour to fix a determinate Idea and Meaning to it.

*Plato*, in his Dialogue entitled *Son*, having had no other View but to rally a certain *Rhapsody*, we look upon what he makes *Socrates* say there upon *Enthusiasm* as a mere Pleasantry. If we may believe this Philosopher, it is not Art which conducts the Poets, it is a heavenly Breath which transports them out of themselves; like the *Corybantes* and *Bacchantes*, who never danc'd but when they were in a Fury, the Poets never sing but when a similar Distraction or Fury seizes upon their Minds.

This Fury is inspired by the Muses into them; and they mutually communicate it to their Hearers. As the Load-stone imparts its attractive Power to Rings, which attract others, and thus form a Chain suspended by it; so one who recites the Verses of a great Poet well, inspires his Hearers with the same Fire he himself feels, which is inspired into him by the Poet whose Work he repeats, who received it from some Divinity, in such a Manner, that from the Hearer to the Reciter, and from him to the Poet, there is a long continued Ring of Nature suspended by a God. But *Plato*, after having trifled in this Manner in this Discourse, speaks seriously in his *Phædrus*, when he affirms, *Who-*  
ever

ever approaches Poetry without being in a Fury, (b) imagining that Art is able to carry him through his Attempt, will never attain to any thing that is not very imperfect; and that, the Poetry of one in cold Blood, evanishes before that of one in a Fit of Poetic Fury.

Cicero was of the same Sentiment, when he asserts, That all the other Sciences stand in Need of Art and Precepts; and that the Poet alone derives all his Force from Nature, from Genius and celestial Inspiration (i). This Opinion made the Poets respected as sacred Persons: And they took care to confirm an Opinion so favourable to their Interest; and have not feared to tell us, That a God dwelt in their Breast.

*Est Deus in nobis, agitante calescimus illo*

*At sacri vates, & Divûm cura vocamur:  
Sunt etiam qui nos numen habere putant.*

OVID.

They have boasted of a Commerce with Heaven.

*— Sunt & commercia cæli.*

OVID.

As for me, without staying to repeat what they have said of the particular Protection the Gods vouchsafe to them; of the Inebriation the Waters of *Hippocrene* occasion to them; of the Nights they slept on Mount *Parnassus*; when I assert, that the Essence of Poetry consists in Enthusiasm, far from imagining that Enthu-

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siasm

(b) *Ανεμ μανίας.*

(i) *Pro Archia Poeta.*

Enthusiasm to be the Effect of Divine Inspiration, I regard it as the natural Product of the Passions; and it is absolutely necessary to Poetry for this very Reason, that Poetry, of whatever Kind, is the Language of some Passion. To be convinc'd of this, it is sufficient to reflect for a Moment on the State of our Mind while any Passion agitates it, and on the proper Language of such a State of Mind.

That Instant any violent Passion transports our Mind, it likewise seizes upon our Body, and spreads a sudden Disorder through it: The Blood flows with Impetuosity, the Countenance is inflamed, the Eyes sparkle, the Voice strengthens; short, broken Sentences burst out one upon the back of another; the warm Flux of animal Spirits heats the Fancy; and various Thoughts rapidly crowd upon the Mind: We express them with all possible Promptitude, and this Impetuosity does not suffer us to observe exact Order in our Discourse: We no longer attend to the ordinary Links of Speech: Our Phrases are bold and hardy; because, being wholly occupied with what strikes us, the Terms we use do not appear to us hyperbolical: We break forth naturally into Exclamations, Apostrophes, Interrogations; and we can address our selves to inanimate Things, because in the Trouble we are, all Nature seems to us to interest itself in our Behalf: Such is the Enthusiasm of the Passions, and such also is the Enthusiasm of Poetry.

Joy was the Passion that first inspired with Songs, and Words proper to them. It was natural that Men should celebrate the Benefits they received from the Bounty of the Gods: And in the Transports of warm Gratitude to Heaven were those Songs conceived, which are so common



mon among the *Hebrew* Writers. We need only look to those of *Moses* after the Passage of the Red-Sea, and that of *Deborah*, to see what magnificent Expressions Joy is capable of pouring forth.

Sorrow, as well as Joy, expresses itself in Poetical Language: We find many mournful Songs in the Prophets; and it is well known what a Number of such were composed for the Death of *Adonis*, by Heathen Poets. It is under the Emotions of the most penetrating Grief, that *Jeremiah* paints *Jerusalem* to us sitting alone, bathed in Tears, and without any Friends to console her; and the High-roads of *Zion* weeping, because none now passed to the Solemnities of the holy City. It is natural to those in Distress to exaggerate their Afflictions; they are so overpowered by them, that they imagine every surrounding Object attentive to their Sighs, and sensible to their Misery. *Moschus* mourning for the Death of *Bion*, makes the Birds, the Beasts, the Trees, the Rivers, and the Fountains join with him in his Grief. The Shepherd, who in *Virgil* laments the Death of *Daphnis*, imagines that the Mountains, the Forests, and the Lions, touched at his Loss, mourned with him.

*Daphni tuum Pænos etiam ingemuisse leones,  
Interitum, montesque feri silvæque loquuntur.*

What can be more lofty than the Images which Admiration inspired into the Author of the Psalms, when he contemplated the awful Majesty of God! The vulgar Translation, as imperfect as it is, hath not wholly extinguished the Poetic Fire of the Original. Sometimes we see the Lord riding on the Clouds; he flies on

the Wings of the Wind; Thunder marches before him, and the Mountains cleave asunder at his Presence: Sometimes he holds a Cup exhaustless of Vengeance in his Hand, with which he makes drunk all the Sinners of the Earth. To speak such a Language is to be a true Poet.

Anger also necessarily employs a Language suitable to its violent Agitation: It is in the Transport of just Wrath against the *Jews*, that *Moses*, before he begins that Song, composed a little before his Death, which is filled with Reproaches against them, addresses himself to Heaven and Earth, and imposes Silence upon universal Nature, that he may be attended to. Anger furnished *Archilochus* with those Arms which were so fatal to *Lycambes*: Indignation alone sufficed to render *Juvenal* a Poet.

*Si natura negat, facit indignatio versum.*

But of all the Passions which have given Birth to Poets, there is none to be compared with Love for its exhaustless Fertility. *Propertius* ow'd his Verses neither to *Calliope* nor to *Apollo*, but to her he fondly lov'd.

*Ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit.*

*Martial*, in order to compose Verses which should live for ever in Fame, only demands an Object capable of charming him.

*Si victura petis carmina, da quod amem.*

*Petrarch* complaining of the Misfortunes and Grievs Love had occasioned to him, owns at the

the same Time, that to it alone he owes his Glory; and that had he not been a Slave to the charming *Laura*, he had been buried among the Vulgar Herd of Mankind, without a Name.

— un roco

*Mormorador di corti, un' huom' del vulgo.*

Corneille has made the same Confession.

*Charmé des deux beaux yeux, mon vers charma  
la cour,*

*Et ce que j'ay de nom, je le dois à l' amour.*

*J'adoray donc Philis, & la secrette estime*

*Que ce divin esprit faisoit de nôtre rime,*

*Me fit devenir poete aussitost qu' amoureux;*

*Elle eut mes premiers vers, elle eut mes derniers  
feux.*

Love has made Poets even among the savage Inhabitants of *America*: *Montagne* quotes some Words of a *Cannibal's* Song, which he is so far from thinking barbarous, that he pronounces them quite *Anacreontic*.

Let us therefore boldly conclude, that the Poetical Stile is none other than the natural Stile of the Passions; and when a Discourse, in which that Stile reigns, is likewise adorned by the Harmony of Verse, then it is called a Poem, *i. e.* A *Work* by Way of Eminence; and he who composes it is called a *Poet*, a Word which does not signify an *Inventor* of *Fictions*, but only a *Worker*, as if it were intended to denote the most perfect Workman, or one whose Works are peculiarly admirable.

But some may say, how can Poetry be the natural Language of the Passions, seeing it is so  
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confined by the Chains of Verse? One transported by the Violence of Passion does not amuse himself with thinking of expressing his Sentiments according to the Precepts of Art: He does not trouble himself about measuring his Discourse, or ruling his Words.

To take off this Objection, 'tis necessary to distinguish between Poetry which is purely natural, and that which is assisted by Art. Genius inspires Rapidity of Stile, and Boldness of Figures: Art corrects afterwards; and in order to render the poetical Stile at the same Time more nervous and harmonious, confines it within the strait Rules of Versification. Poetry at its Birth knew none of these Rules, nothing of this Servitude, which Time and Reflection established afterwards. This *Quintilian* teaches us: *Poema nemo dubitaverit imperito quodam initio fufum, & aurium mensura & similiter decurrentium spatiorum observatione esse generatum, mox in eo repertos pedes.* In reality, tho' some learned Men are of Opinion, that Rules were exactly observed in the Poetry of the *Jews*, it is the more common Sentiment, Art the Beauty of this Poetry only consists in the Sublimity of the Ideas, and a peculiar Cadence of Stile; yet we admire it, because the essential Beauty of Poetry does not lie in the Versification, but in the Vivacity of the Imagery, and in the Boldness of the Figures.

But let none accuse me of considering the Versification merely as an adventitious Ornament: I look upon it on the contrary as an Ornament that must of Necessity add to Nature: And, as the Partizans of Fiction will not give the Title of a Poem to a Thread of Fables wrote in Prose; so I will not give it to a Work full of Enthusiasm, which is not in Verse. But it is so evident,

dent, that poetick Beauty does not chiefly consist in Versification, that how much soever the Work of a great Poet is disfigured, however it may be dishevelled by a bad Translation, yet one will always find in it what *Horace* elegantly calls *Disjecti membra poetæ*. “The Members of a shattered Poet.”

This we shall find in the Translation of a Song in the Prophet *Isaiab*, which I give as a strong Example of the poetical Enthusiasm. The Prophet, after having predicted to the *Jews* their Return from *Babylon*, and the Punishment of the Enemy who had held them in Captivity, of a sudden makes themselves speak, and puts the following Words in their Mouths, which they shall then, in the Transport of their Joy and Astonishment, sing against the King of *Babylon*. *Isaiab*, chap. 14.

*How*

How hath the Oppressor ceased ! the heavy  
Tribute ceased ! The Lord hath broken the  
Staff of the Wicked, and the Scepter of the  
Rulers. He who smote the People in Wrath  
with a continual Stroke ; he that ruled the  
Nations in Anger, is persecuted, and none  
hindereth. The whole Earth is at Rest,  
and is quiet : They break forth into Singing.  
Yea, the Fir Trees rejoice at thee, and the  
Cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art  
laid down, no Feller is come up against us.  
Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet  
thee at thy coming : It stirreth up the Dead  
for thee, even all the chief ones of the  
Earth : It hath raised up from their  
Thrones all the Kings of the Nations. All  
they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou  
also become weak as we ? Art thou become  
like unto us ? Thy Pomp is brought down to  
the Grave, and the Noise of thy Viols : The  
Worm is spread under thee, and the Worms  
cover thee. How art thou fallen from Hea-  
ven, O Lucifer of the Morning ! How art  
thou cut down to the Ground, which didst weak-  
en Nations ! For thou hast said in thine  
Heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will ex-  
alt my Throne above the Stars of God : I  
will sit also upon the Mount of the Congre-  
gation, in the Sides of the North. I will  
ascend above the Heights of the Clouds. I  
will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be  
brought down to Hell, to the Sides of the Pit.  
They that see thee, shall narrowly look upon  
thee and consider thee, saying, Is this the  
Man that made the Earth to tremble, that did  
shake the Kingdoms ?

That



Comment est disparu ce maître impitoyable !  
Et comment du tribut, dont nous fumes chargez,  
Sommes nous soulages !

Le Seigneur a brisé le sceptre redoutable,  
Dont le poid accabloit les humains languissants ;  
Ce sceptre, qui frappoit d'une playe incurable  
Les peuples gemissants.

Nos cris sont apaisez : la terre est en silence.  
Le Seigneur a dompté ta barbare insolence :  
Cruel & superbe tyran,  
Les cedres même du Liban  
Se rejouissent de ta perte.

Il est mort (disen tils) & depuis qu'il n'est plus,  
Jamais de nos debris la montagne couverte  
Ne nous a vû tomber par le fer abbatus.  
Ton aspect improvû fit trembler les lieux sombres,  
Tout l'infer se troubla : les plus superbes ombres  
Coururent pour te voir.

Les Rois des nations descendant de leur throne  
T'allerent recevoir.

Toy même, diront-ils, O Roy de Babylone,  
Toy même, comme nous, te voila donc percé !  
Sur la poussiere renversé.

Des vers tu deviens la pâture,  
Et ton lit est la pourriture.  
Comment es-tu tombé des cieux,  
Astre brillant, fils de l'Aurore !  
Tyran cruel, prince orgueilleux,  
La terre aujourd'huy te devore ;  
Comment es-tu tombé des cieux,  
Astre brillant, fils de l'Aurore !

Dans ton cœur tu disois, à Dieu même pareil  
J'establi ray mon throne au-dessus le soleil,  
Et pres de l'Aquilon, sur la montagne sainte,  
J'iray m'asseoir sans crainte.

A mes pieds trembleront les humains eperdus :  
Tu le disois, & tu n'es plus.

*That made the World as a Wilderness, and destroyed the Cities thereof? that opened not the House of his Prisoners? All the Kings of the Nations, even all of them lie in Glory, every one in his own House. But thou art cast out of thy Grave like an abominable Branch: And, as the Raiment of those that are slain, thrust thro' with a Sword, that go down to the Stones of the Pit, as a Carcase trodden under Feet. Thou shalt not be joined with them in Burial, because thou hast destroyed thy Land, and slain thy People: The Seed of Evil-doers shall never be renowned. Prepare Slaughter for his Children, for the Iniquity of their Fathers; that they do not rise, nor possess the Land, nor fill the Face of the World with Cities. For I will rise against them, saith the Lord of Hosts, and cut off from Babylon the Name, and Remnant, and Son, and Nephew, saith the Lord. I will make it a Possession for the Bittern, and Pools of Water. And I will sweep it with the Besom of Destruction, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

What noble Images, what forcible Figures does the Prophet here amass with an inimitable Vigour and Rapidity! We hear speak by Turns, the departed Shades below, the Cedars of Lebanon, the Jews, the King of Babylon, and those who find his Body. These Metaphors are so bold, that the most sublime Orator durst not use them: It is the Poet alone who can employ them; for he only has the Liberty to give full Course to the Career of his Passions: And it is for this Reason I imagined it might be maintained, that the Essence of Poetry consists in Enthusiasm.

Les passants, qui verront ton cadavre paroître,  
 Diront, en se baissant pour te mieux reconnoître,  
 Est-cela ce mortel qui troubla l'univers!  
 Qui laissa ses captifs soupirer dans les fers!  
 Qui perdit tant d'Etats, detruisit tant de villes!  
 Qui ravageant nos campagnes fertiles  
 Les changeoit en deserts!

Tous le Rois de la terre ont de la sepulture  
 Obtenu, le dernier bonheur:  
 Toy seul privé de ce bonheur.

En tous lieux rejeté, l'horreur de la nature,  
 Homicide d'un peuple à tes soins confié,  
 De ce peuple aujourd'hui tu te vois oublié.  
 Preparez à la mort ses enfants miserables,  
 La race des méchants ne subsistera pas:  
 Courez à tous ses fils annoncer les trespas:  
 Qu'ils perissent, l'auteur de leurs jours deplorables  
 Les a couverts de son iniquité.

Frappez, faites sortir de leurs veins coupables  
 Le reste impur du sang dont ils ont hérité.

A DIS-





*A DISCOURSE to shew that  
there can be no Poems in Prose.*

*By Mr. L'Abbe F R A Q U I E R.*

*Read to the French Academy of Belles Lettres,  
August 2d, 1719.\**

**T**O displace the Land-marks erected by our  
Fathers to distinguish the Heritages of  
Families, has always been punished in Society as  
a very heinous Crime. The Romans made it a  
Part of their Religion not to touch them: They  
adored as a God the Mark which limited their  
Possessions: It was a sure Way of avoiding all  
Contests and Confusions;

*Omnis erit sine te litigiosus ager.*

OVID. Fast. l. 2.

And of maintaining Justice and Property, by  
preserving the certain Knowledge of every one's  
Possessions.

*Limes agro positus, litem ut discerneret arvis.*

VIRG. Æneid. l. 12. v. 898.

Throughout

\* Memoirs of Literature, T. 6. p. 265.

Throughout the vast Field of Human Science, in the Partition of the ingenious Arts, each has its Boundaries : The Intelligence which animates them all, and gives them Fecundity, presides over their several Productions; *Spiritus intus alit*. The same Spirit watches likewise over the Preservation of the Limits which separate them; none of them can be dislodged out of its proper Place, without being culpable in its Eyes : It is to disturb the Order it has established, it is to create Disorder and Confusion where Harmony and Tranquillity ought to reign.

If certain Wits, who confound Poetry with Prose, had well considered the Nature and Consequences of their Enterprize, they would have contented themselves with excelling in either, without removing the unalterable Boundaries by which they are essentially separated. But let us search into the Origin of such an Innovation.

The Poet, whose Art consists wholly in Imitation and Painting, will find, say they, in Prose, and there more abundantly than in Verse, all that is necessary for Painting and Imitation. Wherefore, without subjecting the Liberty of his Genius to the Constraints and Fetters of Verse, which always too straitly confine the Imagination, he will attain to the End of his Art; and his Compositions, tho' in Prose, will notwithstanding be in Reality excellent Poems.

In answer to this Reasoning, I say, that a Poet is not naturally an Imitator only, since he hath the free Choice of the Means he employs in imitating: But that he is tied down to Verse in his Imitations.

The Painter, the Musician, and the Poet, have equally for their End and Object Imitation: The Musician imitates by Sounds, the Painter by Colours;

lours; and the Poet by chosen Words, the different Union of which, within the Bounds of an unvaried Measure, produce an infinitely diversified Harmony. This is what is called Verse: And because by the Aid of this Harmony the Poet, more hardy than either the Musician or the Painter, makes Images pass which are far more lively and grand than any Prose can admit, and thus gives an original Air to his Copy; his Imitation is termed in one Word *Poem*, i. e. *Work*; and he himself, the Author of such a wonderful Imitation is denominated, by Way of Eminence, *The Worker*, *poētās*. Hence the Authority of the first Poets over the human Mind.

*Sylvestres homines sacer interpretæque Deorum  
Cædibus, & fædo victu deterruit Orpheus.*

HOR. Art. Poet.

For most assuredly it was not by Odes in Prose; that *Orpheus* tamed Lions and Tygers.

*Dictus ob hoc lenire tigres rabidosque leones.*

Nor that *Amphion* raised the Walls of *Thebes*.

*Dictus & Amphion, Thebanæ conditor arcis  
Saxa movere sono testudinis & prece blanda,  
Ducere quo vellet.*

'Twas by the magical Power of fine Verse (*k*), that both getting fast hold of the human Heart, led Men to Virtue; infomuch that the glorious Name of Poet being due to the Admiration with which Men were struck by their Verse, it could never after be acquired or preserved but by Means of the same enchanting Versification which gave Birth to it.

The

(*k*) Canto quæ solitus. — *Amphion Dircaus*. VIRG. Ec. 2.



The Poet then, has Measures and Numbers for every Kind of Imitation.

*Res gestæ regumque ducumque, & tristia bella,  
Quo scribi possint numero monstravit Homerus.  
Versibus impariter junctis querimonia primum  
Post etiam inclusa est voti sententia compos.*

HOR. Ibidem.

Each Subject, in general, demands the Kind of Verse suitable to its Nature and Genius : And it is the Poet's Business to find within the Confines of each particular Measure, all the various Cadences proper to set before the Reader's Eyes, Images traced from the most beautiful Nature and from Fancy. This is the masterly Power of Poetry, to which Prose can never arrive; *Odi profanum vulgus & arceo.*

Verse may be a Subjection to one of an ordinary Genius ; to a Poet it is Sport, it is Pleasure: He is at no Loss to find those fine Arrangements of Words which enchant the Ear: Words flow at his Command, and as it were voluntarily take their Places. Out of them he forms an exquisite Melody: He glides from one Sound to another: Some he sinks and enfeebles, on purpose to raise and strengthen others: And if in all this he finds any Difficulty, that Labour enhances the Merit of his Works: The Efforts he makes to surmount it, and the Fire with which he is inflamed, awaken Ideas and Expressions in a Mind glowing with the Sense and Love of Glory, much more beautiful and striking than any Prose can suggest with all its boasted Freedom. *Virgil* explains himself on this Subject most admirably.

*Nec sum animi dubius, verbis ea vincere magnum  
Quam sit, & augustis hunc addere rebus honorem.  
Sed me Parnassi deserta per ardua dulcis  
Raptat amor: juvat ire jugis qua nulla priorum  
Castaliam molli divertitur orbita clivo.*

Georg. l. 3. v. 289.

And elsewhere,

*Tentanda via est, qua me quoque possim  
Tollere humo, victorque virum volitare per ora.*  
Ibid. v. 8.

The Vulgar of Mankind, dazzled by the Lustre of such a rare Talent, have ascribed it to Divine Inspiration, which makes the Poet an Instrument to *Apollo* and the *Muses*.

*Sic honor & nomen vatibus atque  
Carminibus venit.*

HOR. Art. Poet.

*Sing Muse, says (l) Homer: And Virgil cries  
aloud,*

*Pandite nunc Heliconæ deæ, cantusque movete.*

Æneid 7. v. 641.

“I sing, *Homer* wrote, says *Apollo*.”

Ἡεῖδον μὲν ἐγὼν, ἐχάρασσε δὲ θεῖος Ὅμηρος.  
Anthol. Græca.

The Oracle, to give itself a more Divine Air, expressed itself in Verse.

Dist.

(l) *Iliad* & *Odyss.* α.

*Diffæ per carmina sortes.*

HOR. Art. Poet.

Whatever Eloquence any Orator may have had, hath he been ever the Interpreter of the Gods? And can we debase Poetry more than to transform it into Prose? Add to this that Poetry is adapted to singing.

*Musa lyræ solers & cantor Apollo.*

HOR. *ibid.*

The different Species of it had anciently a Relation to the respective Instruments which were the distinguishing Symbols of the Muses, and to various Modes of harmonical Composition.

*Ye Songs, which regulate my Lyre, says Pindar, Olymp. 2.*

And Horace,

*Verba Lyræ motura sonum.*

HOR. Ep. 2. l. 2.

Suffer Prose but to enter into the Ode, and what will become of its poetical Fire and Enthusiasm? To sing Prose, some perhaps will say, A fine Employment!

— *O testudinis aureæ*

*Dulcem quæ strepitum, Pieri, temperas.*

HOR. Od. 3. l. 5.

Muse, whose Lyre brings forth such delightful Sounds, shall you be reduced to elevate the Merit



rit of your Enemy, and in Prejudice of the Language of the Gods, to give a Value to that of Mortals?

What, say they, Is not Prose susceptible of Cadence and Harmony? It is undoubtedly. Nothing is more evident from the Writings of the famous Orators: The ancient Teachers of Eloquence prescribe Rules for attaining to it. But one essential Rule relative to Prose in all Languages and in Stile of every Kind, is that in seeking for the Harmony of Words, and the Riches of Numbers, one cannot be too attentive to keep at a Distance from those Sounds and Numbers, which being peculiar to Poetry, would render Prose in some Measure poetical.

As for the true Harmony of Prose, to whatever Degree of Perfection *Demosthenes* and *Cicero*, *Balzac* and *Patru* may have carried it, they will never be brought into Competition with *Homer*, nor with *Virgil*: And how far do they fall below *Pindar* and *Horace*, *Malberbe* and *Sarazin*? But as we have already said, 'tis from the Enchantment of Harmony, so infinitely diversified amidst the Uniformity of Verse, that the Poet owes his Name, and the Glory annexed to it.

Which is more, the Poets of every Country have made a particular Language for themselves, consisting partly of antique Words, Words transferred from their primitive to another Signification, Words more figurative and more energetick, Words either more soft or more rude than those employ'd to mark the same Things in common Discourse. The Gods, says *Homer*, call such a Thing so; Men give it another Name: We may say precisely the same of Prose and Poetry. This Difference in Language lies no less in the Construction, than in the Turns  
and

and Figures. The Poet and the Orator, says *Anthony* in *Cicero*, seem not to speak the same Language. *Poetas, — quasi alia quadam lingua locutos.* A Greek would have said the same of the *Roman* Poets: We say so every Day of the *Italian*, *Spanish* and *English* Poets. If this Difference of Stile be less sensible in the *French* Tongue, it however takes place in it likewise, and is very distinguishable by those who thoroughly understand the Genius of the Language. But were it less remarkable in it than it is in other Languages, is this a Reason for utterly effacing and destroying it? for passing the Plow over the dividing Land-marks, and giving to Prose what hath always belonged to Poetry; and thus making, of two distinct Heritages, one and the same common Field?

*Malberbe* did not use them in this Manner; he could cultivate both without confounding them. His Stile in Prose is masculine and nervous; but in order to manage poetical Subjects as they ought, he had formed to himself an elevated, rich and harmonious Language.

*Despreaux* says justly of him,

*Fit sentir le vers une juste cadence,  
D'un mot mis en sa place enseigner le pouvoir.*

L'Art Poet.

He made Rhime contribute to render his Compositions yet more precious and beautiful. This is the Road chalked out by the great Masters for rising to the Perfection of Art, and rendering one's Name respectable to latest Posterity. All this poetical Equipage is not less interdicted

Prose, than Prose is Poetry ; and I know not which is most blame-worthy, the poetick Prose, or the prosaick Poetry. However that be, does not Prose over-charged with poetical Ornaments, seem to labour to destroy, by its great care to embellish, that particular Beauty naturally belonging to it ?

*Naturæque decus mercato perdere cultu,  
Nec sinere in propriis membra nitere bonis.*

PROP. 1. 1. Eleg. 2.

Perhaps not so good natured a Critick might call it a ridiculous Mascarade, compare it to an old Country Comedian, who the more she is dressed out, the more ridiculous she is ; and address her in this rude Manner with the Rustick in *Plautus* : *Do you fancy yourself handsomer because you have Bracelets and Jewels, and have given your Robe and your Face a new Dip ?*

*An eo bella es, quia accepisti armillas & virias?  
Quia tibi insuaso fecisti, propudiosa, pallulam ?  
Quiaque istas buccas tam belle purpurissatas  
habes ?*

PLAUT. Truciol. 2 Act. Sc. 2.

Let not Prose, which hath its own special Beauty, go about to beg a Foreign one ; and above all, let it not flatter itself with the Hopes of ever equalling Poetry by the Aid of borrowed Embellishments.

Let us call to Mind the Pleasure good Verses afford us, when the Truth and Beauty of Sentiments supported, nay enhanced by the Charms of Numbers and Harmony, take powerful Hold of our Soul and entirely possess it : When the En-  
thusiast



thufiasm of the Poet feizes the Actor, and paffes from him to the Hearer. If fo much as one Word is displaced ; if but one Syllable is out of Order ; if the Harmony be broken in the fmalleſt Degree by negligent Pronunciation, all our Pleaſure evaniſhes. What muſt then be the Caſe, if the Verſe is wholly deſtroyed, and reduced to mere Proſe ? Nothing would remain but, at moſt, what *Horace* calls *Diſjecti membra Poetæ*, the ſhattered Members of a diſjointed Poet, which can no more make a Poem, than ſevered, ſcattered Limbs a Body.

Be cauſe after having deſtroyed the Verſification, which being very like to Proſe, is proper to Comedy, nothing remain'd but mere Proſe, without one Spark of that Divine Fire which is the Soul of true Poetry ; *Horace*, a great Poet and an able Critick, ſeems to approve the Opinion of thoſe who reſuſed Comedy a Place amongſt the poetical Compoſitions.

*Quidam Comædia nec ne Poema  
Eſſet, quæſierat ; quod acer ſpiritus, ac vis  
Nec verbis, nec rebus ineſt, niſi quod pede certo  
Differt ſermoni ſermo merus.*

HOR. l. I. Sat. 4.

However, ſays he, we often find in Comedy a provoked angry Father, reproaching his Son for his Extravagancy and Irregularities, in Terms full of Fire and Paſſion.

————— *At pater ardens  
Sævit, quod meretrice nepos inſanit amica,  
Filius uxorem grandi cum dote recuſet, &c.*

But

But to make a Work deserving to be called a Poem, it is not sufficient, says *Horace*, to express one's self in Terms, which if you but alter their Form and Arrangement a little, every angry Father would naturally use

*Non satis est puris versum perscribere verbis,  
Quem si dissolvas, quivis stomachetur eodem  
Quo personatus pacto pater.*

But if Comedy in Verse, as it then always was, deserved not, in his Opinion, the Name of a Poem, What must he have thought of our Comedies in Prose? He would undoubtedly have looked upon them but as Dialogues, such as several other ancient Dialogues, which have never passed for Poems, and whose Authors have never been accounted Poets.

*Ingenium cui sit, cui mens divinior, atque os  
Magna sonaturum, des nominis hujus bonorem.*

This fine Genius, *ingenium*, this Divine Genius, *mens divinior*, this rich Vein of Harmony, *os magna sonaturum*: All this, according to *Horace*, is requisite to make a Poet, and belongs only to the Poet who speaks in beautiful Numbers.

This would be the proper Place for replying to those, who, admitting no Difference between one Language and another, maintain, that Beauty of Sounds, and the Harmony redounding from thence, are but Chimæra: But the Question being about a Matter of Taste and Sentiment, which cannot be given to those who have not received it from Nature, let us satisfy ourselves with pitying them, and let us not insult their Misfortune.

fortune. For ourselves, let us only entreat such not to condemn our Sensibility, but to suffer us to enjoy our foolish Fancy, if it be such, or to profit by a Sense which we have more than they, if there be indeed any reality in it.

————— *Si modo ego & vos . . . .*

*Legitimumque sonum digitis callemus & aure.*

HOR. Art. Poet.

It will, perhaps, be objected to me, that I make Poetry wholly to consist in Versification. Were I of this Sentiment I could support it by the Authority (m) of *Isaac Casaubon* (n): I could likewise quote *Plato*, in whose Judgment, *Every Poetical Work, when considered abstractly from Harmony of Verse and Musick, is no more than a Face, which having no real Beauty, bath nothing to recommend it, but a certain Air of Freshness and Youth, which quickly passes away.* But I chuse rather to answer, that there may be Verses without any Poetry in them.

————— *Neque enim concludere versum*

*Dixeris esse satis.*

But there can be no Poetry without Verse.

In order to explain this Reply, let it be observed, that all the fine Arts have something in common, and something particular to each, that constitutes its proper and distinguishing Character. For Instance, the Painter and the Poet must be able to compose a beautiful Whole of the different Parts of Nature they study and copy,

(m) Casaub. de Sat. Gr. Poet. &c.

(n) De Rep. l. 10. p. 601.



copy, which often does not exist but in their Imagination.

——— *- Poeta tabulas cum cepit sibi,  
Quærit quod nusquam est gentium, reperit ta-*  
*men.*

PLAUT. Pseud. Act I. Sc. 4.

Both must *design*, each in his own Manner, what they have invented, mark and distribute all the Parts, and all their Bearings, Relations and Dependencies. But when all this is done, if the Painter should not add Colours; and if the Poet should not add Versification, neither hath the one made a Picture, nor the other a Poem: For as Colours are essential to a Picture, so is Versification to Poetry.

It will be said, is not a Poem transformed into Prose a Poem still? Who will say it is not? Do not the Plan, the Ordonnance, the Thoughts, the Sentiments, the Descriptions still subsist; all in a Word one can desire to know and understand from the Original? I dare adventure to ask in my Turn, If a Print engraved after a Picture, is a Picture? If they agree it is not, I am ready, in favour of so beautiful and useful an Art, to let pass, without further Dispute, the whole Comparison between a Print in respect of a Picture, and a Prose Translation in respect to the Original in Verse.——— I say, to let it pass without more Dispute; for there would even upon that Concession be room for a great deal. As then, the World is greatly obliged to the Labours of a *Marc Antonio*, that famous Engraver, which have put it in the Power of an Infinity of Persons to be acquainted with the Compositions of *Raphael*, of which they would, without such Help,

Help, have had no Idea; so we cannot put too high a Value on the Labours of those happy Genius's, who possessing some Share of the Talents of the great Poets they have translated, have given some Idea of them in Prose to many who could never otherwise have known them. It is certainly a very meritorious Service, especially when their Translations are accompanied with learned Remarks and judicious Reflexions, by which, as much as can be, is restored to their Originals, of what they must necessarily lose in the best Prose Translations. Let us admire the fine Translations of the most renowned Poets, with which several illustrious Persons have enriched our Language and Age: Let us make a proper Use of them for our better understanding the ancient Originals: But after having rendered to every one his due Praise, let us agree, out of Regard to Truth, that Poems stripp'd of that Harmony peculiar to them, have no more that charming Complexion, that wonderful captivating Beauty, which according to *Plato*, makes them Poems. I am apt to think I cannot be charged with affirming any thing not agreeable to the Idea the Ancients had of Poetry. If the *Latin* Writers have never translated the *Greek* Poets into Prose, it was because their Verse being very like to that of the *Greeks*, it was not difficult for them to do it in Verse; and they thought they could not pretend to present their Countrymen with a Poem, if they gave them Prose.

And indeed no Writer ever assumed to himself the Name of a Poet, when he did not compose in Verse. Neither *Apuleius* nor *Lucian* are ranked in that Class: Yet the *Metamorphoses* of the former is a very poetical Work; and the  
History

History of *Psyche* would be a Poem, were it not in Prose. The Stile of *Apuleius* is florid enough to merit the new Name of Poetical-Prose: The Visions of *Lucian* in his *true History*, are of the same Kind: His Stile is gay and flowery; bedecked with the Flowers only to be gathered in the Garden of the Muses: But neither of them is classed with the Poets. And why? Because neither of them wrote in Verse. I might say the same of *Scipio's Dream*; the Beauty, the Sublimity of which Composition would have merited *Cicero* the first Rank among the Poets, if Prose could have gained that Prize.

The Verses Mr. D'Urfé has inserted into his *Astrea*, have given occasion to say of him, that as good a Writer of *Romance* as he was, he was not a good Poet. And therefore Romances have no better Title to be called Poems than other Prose-works. I am persuaded that the illustrious Author of *Telemachus* never intended to make it a Poem: He knew too well every part of the *Belles Lettres*, not to pay due Regard to the Limits which divide that Territory into different Provinces: He lov'd our Language too much to think of spoiling it; and Poetry too well to destroy it. He would have been sorry to have given a pernicious Example, that might, by its Effects, at last have reduced us to the Poverty of some Eastern Nations, which never produced true Poems. All their Poetry is nothing but high-sounding Prose, and an enormous Assemblage of extravagant Metaphors, monstrous Hyperboles, and affected enigmatical Epithets. In one Word, their Poetry is like their Musick, which consists in a confused barbarous Arrangement of Words and Sounds, which having no Proportion, no Concord, cannot be

re-



reduced to Rules and Measures of Harmony capable of arithmetical Demonstration.

In fine, if one could merit the Name of Poet by writing in Prose, every one would aspire at the Character: A high-swoln Stile would hold the Rank of the true Sublime: An arbitrary Disposition of Phrases and Periods would hold the Rank of Harmony: And besides, the Ideas called Poetical being trite, and within the Reach of every one, every new Day would bring forth some new Monster call'd a Poem. Fine Poets, disgusted to see their Laurels thus prostituted to every Trifler, would abandon an Art from which formerly they derived real Honour; and ranking this pretended Poetry with the lowest Arts, they will say with Indignation,

*Frangere leves calamos & scinde Thalia libellos,  
Si dare futuri calceus ista potest.*

MART. l. 9. Ep. 75.

Thus have I given you, Gentlemen, a slight Sketch of what might be said upon a Subject which it was of Importance to handle, lest if Poetry should come to change its Features amongst us, or to be entirely lost, other polite Nations and Posterity should impute it to the Silence of this Society.

OBSER-



OBSERVATIONS *upon the Antiquity of Literature ; of Poetry in particular, amongst the Gauls more especially.* ‡

THE Desire of Knowledge is born with Man, and 'tis not extinguished while he exists. Every one would be learned ; and those who seem most indifferent about the Sciences, are, however, very desirous of understanding all that regards their Profession, their Exercises, or their Amusements.

*Adam*, instructed by God himself, communicated his Knowledge to his Children ; and they transmitted it to their Descendants. Thus the Sciences are as ancient as the World. 'Tis true, there have been Times in which they have been more or less cultivated ; and there have been Countries in which they have flourish'd more than in others : Such was ancient *Gaul*, as Mr. *L'Abbe d'Anselme* has endeavoured to prove in a Memoir he read to the Academy (o).

To

‡ Hist. of the Royal Academy of *Belles Lettres*. T. 5.  
(o) An. 1718.

To shew that the Sciences were cultivated in Gaul from the earliest Times, he did not satisfy himself with bringing Testimonies from Modern Authors who had asserted the same Fact before him, tho' they be Men of high Reputation for their Learning (p). He had Recourse directly to the Ancients; and it is from them he proved not only that the Gauls loved and studied the Sciences, but that it was amongst them that other Nations sought for Instructors.

Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, and Ammian. Marcellinus distinguish three Classes of learned Men among the Gauls; the Bards, the Diviners and the Druids. The Bards, so called from the Celtick Word Bard, signifying a Singer, flourish'd chiefly in Auvergne and Burgundy, and had Colleges there (q). Their Profession was to write the Actions of great Men, and to sing them to the Sound of an Instrument, somewhat like the Lyre. So Lucan tells us (r):

*Vos quoque qui fortes animas, belloque peremptas  
Laudibus in longum vates demittitis ævum,  
Plurima securi fudistis carmina Bardi.*

The Diviners employ'd themselves in searching into the Secrets of Nature, and made a Profession of explaining them: They carried their Curiosity so far, as to pretend to penetrate into future Events, and drew the Multitude to them, who blindly submitted to their Oracles (s).

But the Druids were the most renowned, and the wisest of the three, in the Opinion of Pythagoras,

H who

(p) Cluver. German. Antiq. l. 1. c. 4. Forcat. de Gall. imp. &c.

(q) Strabo, l. 4.

(r) Pharsal. l. 1.

(s) Diodorus Siculus.



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who knew their Abilities, and taught many Things he had learned from these Sages of Gaul. This is affirmed by *Ammianus Marcellinus*, *Druidæ ingeniis celsiores, ut autoritas Pythagoræ decrevit* (t). Being Philosophers as well as Theologues, they taught both Physicks and Morals; and a Notion prevailed among the People, that they were in Commerce with the Divinity. It is certain, that being more knowing than the *Bards* and the *Diviners*, they surpassed them in Authority likewise, and soon became the only Persons to whom any Credit or Veneration was paid in Gaul. The Oak, 'tis well known, was held sacred by them. Their Forests were full of it, and it was a Crime to destroy this Holy Tree. They separated themselves from the rest of the World, and lived in the Middle of these Forests, where they had their Colleges, the most celebrated of which was in the *Chartrain*, as *Cæsar* informs us (u). Here their Chief or Head-Pontif resided; and here the whole Body of the *Druids* assembled once every Year. Being the Judges of the Nation, all Differences were laid before them, and submitted to their Decisions. Those who would not acquiesce in their Determinations, were excommunicated from their religious Mysteries. The *Druids* had several other Colleges depending upon this principal one we have just mentioned. Those at *Marseilles*, *Toulouse*, and in other considerable Cities, are often mentioned by ancient Authors, as *Du Boulay* has observed in the Preface to his History of the University of *Paris*. In these Colleges they taught Rhetorick and Philosophy. In the latter they treated of the System

(t) Diodorus Siculus, l. 15.

(u) In finibus Carnutum confidunt in luco consecrato. *Cæsar*. Comment. l. 5.

tem of the World, the Motions of the celestial Bodies; and the Power of the Gods; and they pretended to know what the Gods required of Men (x), to use the Expression of *Pomponius Mela*. *Cicero* says; that they applied themselves also to discover future Events; partly by Augury, and partly by a conjectural Art (y). *Pliny* adds, that they made Use of the Shrubs that grow on the Oak, in their Magick Mysteries.

The Immortality of the Soul was one of their principal Doctrines. They said, that Death was but a Passage from this to another Life.

————— *Regit idem spiritus ortus*  
*Orbe alio: longæ, canitis si cognita, vitæ*  
*Mors media est.*

LUCRETIVS.

And it was this Persuasion that rendered the ancient *Gauls* so intrepid, that many of them threw themselves into the Funeral-Piles kindled to burn the Dead; and all of them contemned the greatest Perils of War, looking upon it as an unaccountable Cowardice, not to dare to risk this transient Life for another that endureth for ever, as the same Poet tells us.

Whether the *Druids* did it to exercise the Memory of their Disciples, or whether they feared the Profanation of their Mysteries, it is certain they obliged them to get a great Number of their Verses by Heart, and forbid the Writing of them. As for the rest, they used *Greek* Characters in writing them: And indeed this Practice of putting Theology and Philosophy into Verse is very ancient; it continued to be the

H 2

Usage,

(x) *Druidæ quod Dii velint se scire profitentur. l. 3. c. 2.*

(y) *L. 3. de Divinat.*

Usage, if we may believe *Apuleius*, till *Phercydes*, who first introduced Prose into the Schools (z).

'Tis then beyond all Controversy, that the *Gauls* very early cultivated the Sciences. They likewise studied Eloquence, for which they had a natural Genius, as we are told by *Strabo* and *Themistius*, who goes so far as to affirm, that they were better turn'd for it than the *Greeks* themselves (a). *Juvenal* says, that they had taught the *Britons* this Art:

*Gallia caustidicos docuit facunda Britannos.*

*St. Jerom* makes this high Encomium upon them, that while so many Nations grovell'd in Ignorance and Sloth, *Gaul* had always been filled with warlike and eloquent Men (b). The same Father says elsewhere, that Learning was in a very flourishing State in *Gaul*; and that their literary Works were equally polite and elegant (c). But of all the Cities in *Gaul*, none ever surpassed the Fame of *Marseilles* for Learning and Eloquence. This City was as polite, according to *Livy* (d), as if it had been in the midst of *Greece*. *Cicero* calls it the new *Athens* of *Gaul* (e); and *Pliny* the Mistress of Arts (f). Thither, says *Strabo*, the most distinguished among the *Romans* went to study. 'Tis in this School that those great Men were formed, whose Names are so renowned among the Ancients; such as *Telon* and *Gigareus*, two Brothers,

both

(z) Flond. 5. Versuum nexu repudiato, conscribere ausus passivis verbis *Phercydes*.

(a) Orat. 4. & 5.

(b) Adv. Vigil. Epist. ad Ru.

(c) Decad. 4. l. 7.

(d) Pro Flacc.

(e) L. 4.

(f) L. 25. c. 2.



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both excellent Mathematicians, according to *Lucan*; *Pytheas*, that famous Geographer and Astronomer in the Time of *Alexander* the Great, of whom *Pliny* makes so honourable mention; *Castor* a most skilful Physician, and many others (*b*). The City of *Lions* was also very early renowned for its Love and Encouragement of the Sciences: Some Authors pretend (*i*) that the *Druids* held their Assemblies there, when the *Phœnicians* and *Greeks* came to settle in that Place. But when the *Romans* sent a Colony thither, the Arts and Sciences were in a more flourishing Condition in that City. *Juvenal* and *Sueton* speak of an Academy there for Greek and Roman Eloquence, which was called *Atheneum*. *Arles*, *Bordeaux*, and several other Cities cultivated the Sciences no less than *Lions* and *Marseilles*: But *Toulouse* had merited to be called the City of *Pallas*, by its good Taste in Poetry and Oratory.

*Palladiæ non inficienda Tolosæ  
Gloria.*

MART. l. 9. Epig. 101.

Thus *Martial* and *Ausonius* speak of it: And other ancient Authors frequently mention the great Men who were bred in those Schools of *Gaul*, and became Masters at *Rome*. Such was *Valerius Cato*, surnamed *Latina Siren* (*k*); *L. Plotius*, an illustrious Rhetorician, Cotemporary with *Crassus*; and not to mention any more, *Ant. Gniphos*, whom *Cicero* himself went to hear.

H 3

Would

(*b*) *Paradon & du Rubis Hist. de Lyon.* Du Boullay de vetustissimis Galliarum Academiis.

(*i*) *Sueton.* Cicero de claris orator.

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Would to Heaven, that in a Country where the Sciences have ever flourished, and in which the last Age has brought all of them to such a Height of Perfection, we may not see their Decay proceed from the same Spirit of Affectation and Love of Points, which occasioned that sad Decline of them which was complained of at *Rome*, immediately after the Age of *Augustus*!



**OBSER-**



OBSERVATIONS *upon the*  
*Progress and Decline of Letters ;*  
*of Poetry in particular ||.*

WE have just now seen that the Sciences had been cultivated in the earliest Times of the World, in *Gaul* more especially : But History informs us, that all the more distinguished Ages for the flourishing of Arts and Letters, have been immediately succeeded by Barbarity and Ignorance. Mr. *Racine* has attempted to discover the general Causes of such Changes and Revolutions (1). He distinguishes four Ages, in which the Arts and Sciences have made the greatest Figure. That of *Philip* and *Alexander* in *Greece* ; That of *Cæsar* and *Augustus* at *Rome* ; That of *Leo* the Xth, and of *Francis* the 1st in *Italy* and in *France* ; and in fine, that of *Lewis* the XIIIth and *Lewis* XIVth. He quickly passed over the Age of *Leo* Xth, tho' it was the Epoch of the Restoration of Learning in the West, 'Twas Painting, according to him, that principally signalized this Age. As for the other three, he sets them in a singular Point of View, but one that shews their very short Duration.

H 4

Mr.

|| Ibidem.

(1) *Ann* 1721.



Mr. *Huet*, says he, who saw *Descartes*, a Philosopher, whom, whether we follow the Order of Time, or of Genius, we ought to place at the Head of those illustrious Personages, whose Works have rendered the last Age comparable to that of *Alexander*, or that of *Augustus*, liv'd to see the whole Succession of those great Men, who carried the Arts and Sciences to so eminent a Pitch of Perfection and Glory.

An *Athenian* who had liv'd to so great an Age as that learned *Prelate*, might have boasted of having seen *Sophocles* and *Euripides*, *Apelles* and *Praxiteles*, *Socrates*, *Plato* and *Aristotle*, *Thucydides* and *Xenophon*, *Aristophanes* and *Menander*.

A *Roman* of as long a Life might have gloried in having received Letters of Virtue from *Cato* and *Brutus*; and of having gone from the Harangues of *Cicero*, to enjoy the Pleasures of good Company with *Catullus*, *Tibullus*, and *Propertius*; that *Lucrece* had explained to him the Mysteries of Nature; and the learned *Varro* had cleared up all his Doubts in Matters of Chronology and Literature; that *Horace*, *Virgil*, and *Ovid* had charm'd him; and that *Salust* and *Livy* had instructed him in History.

When one reflects upon these happy Ages, and finds so many great Genius's flourishing at the same Time, it is natural to ask, Why these extraordinary Genius's have been almost always Cotemporary, and have almost never left Successors worthy of them, as if Nature having exhausted herself by such vigorous Productions, required a long Time to repose and recruit? It is difficult, says Mr. *Racine*, to give a satisfying Answer to this Question; and *Paterculus* owns, that after long Search into the Matter, he

he had not been able to discover any certain Cause of this Phænomenon (m). The Reasons *Cicero* gives (n), who says, That the Sciences, when they have arrived to a certain Degree of Perfection, grow old and decline; or *Seneca*, who imputes it to the Jealousy of Destiny (o), are very far from being satisfactory. It is commonly asserted, that the Protection of Princes produces great Men; and that *Virgil* will not be wanting where there are *Mecænas's*: But Mr. *Racine* does not approve of this Reason. " 'Tis  
 " true, says he, the Beneficence of Princes ex-  
 " cites Emulation, and frequently gives great  
 " Men leisure to improve their Talents; but sure-  
 " ly it does not give the Talents: The Prospect  
 " of Recompences doth not elevate the Soul; it  
 " doth not inspire it with sublime Thoughts.  
 " When one is enriched by the Liberality of a  
 " Patron, he thinks more at his Ease, but does  
 " he think better? The greater Part of the Ro-  
 " man Emperors piqued themselves upon being  
 " Orators and Poets; yet their Inclination to  
 " these Arts neither revived a *Cicero* nor a *Vir-*  
 " *gil*. *Marcus Aurelius*, who was so great a  
 " Friend to Philosophers, was not able to form  
 " one who would have merited the Name in the  
 " Days of *Socrates* and *Plato*. *Francis I.* whose  
 " Liberality procured him the Name of *Father*  
 " *of Letters*, did not find one Poet, except *Ma-*  
 " *rot*, worthy of his Liberality. The favour-  
 " able Fortune of *Amyot* was proper enough to  
 " raise Emulation among the Learned; yet this  
 " Emulation produced in the Reign of *Charles*  
 " IX. but very indifferent Writers. It is not  
 " there-

(m) L. I. c. 17.

(n) Tusc. qu. 2.

(o) Controv. 1.

“ therefore to the Patronage of *Mecænas* that  
 “ we owe *Cicero*, *Catullus*, and *Tibullus* ; and  
 “ *Virgil*, tho’ he had not been known to him,  
 “ would have been *Virgil* still. In fine, *says he*,  
 “ it was not the Bounty of Cardinal *Richlieu*  
 “ which formed the great Men who began to  
 “ flourish under his Ministry ; there were many  
 “ who had no Share of it ; and the Chagrine he  
 “ gave to *Pierre Corneille*, would have deprived  
 “ us of that sublime Genius, if the Fire which  
 “ animates great Men were kindled and extin-  
 “ guished at the Pleasure of prime Ministers.”

Publick Liberty is represented as one principal Cause of the Glory to which the Sciences have arrived ; and it is true, that it has frequently supported Eloquence in Republicks, because Eminence in it was the Road to the first Dignities in such States. But it is as true, that Poetry, and the other elegant Arts, did not flourish at *Rome* in the Time of its Consuls, and make no great Progress, at present, in Countries which have long enjoy’d Liberty to a very great Extent.

In the room of Moral Causes some have substituted Physical Ones. They imagine, that in the same Country there is sometimes a certain Temperature of the Air, which contributes to the Elevation of Genius’s, and then another which depresses them. Mr. *Racine* grants, that in consequence of the intimate Union between our Body and Mind, external Causes must affect us very differently ; that one Climate inspires Joy, and another Sadness ; that in the Eastern Countries, for instance, People are more lively than in the icy North ; and that there is an observable Difference of Character even between neighbouring Nations. The *Athenians*, who enjoyed a pure, serene Sky, mocked the Stupidity of the People,  
 who



who were as it were buried in the thick Air of *Bæotia*: But it is hardly conceivable, how, in the same Country, a new Kind of Air should all of a sudden spread itself, that can inspire Infants with a Vigour unknown to their Fathers; and, which renders the People, during its short Continuance, so very different from what they were before; or how this Air should communicate its good Influences to certain Persons, while others feel no Effect of it. In the Reign of *Lewis* the XIVth, when there must have been a great Quantity of this lucky Air, there were many very indifferent Authors. We find some Ages indeed more fruitful, than others, of great Genius's; but there is scarcely one which has not produced some. We must therefore look out for some more probable Reason of this Fecundity, than any of those we have been refuting. Mr. *Racine* thinks it must be attributed to the Concurrence of many happy Circumstances, all of which contribute to diffuse a general Joy amongst a People; and Leisure, which gives Room to the Spirits to develop themselves. *Poetry, says he, Painting, and all the elegant Arts, are the Offspring of Joy.*

*Carmina proveniunt animo deducta sereno.*

OVID. Trist. I. Eleg. I.

It is true, Grief and Melancholy may sometimes inspire with mournful Verses. *Orpheus* and *Simonides* are Proofs of it: But it is undeniable, that a long Course of Sorrow enfeebles the Mind, and quite incapacitates it for shining Productions. Cold Countries have produced Metaphysicians and Geometricians: But there good Poets

Poets or good Painters are very uncommon.

When a State is in a flourishing Condition, so that (p) every thing conspires to its Opulence and Greatness; when glorious Successes have assured its Tranquillity; when Plenty reigns, and the Government is mild and gentle: then Joy is universal and uninterrupted. Those who have natural Talents cultivate them with Pleasure: Being calm and content, they see farther than they could have been able to stretch their Sight in a less quiet State: Those who have not Talents, at least know the Merit of them, admire those who are

(p) There is Passage much to this Purpose, in *Cicero de Claris Oratoribus, sive Brutus*, N. 12. which our Author might have quoted. *Cicero* is speaking of Eloquence; but what he says there, is equally true of all the other Arts: But all I would observe here is, that it is common among modern Writers, to talk of the Age of *Alexander* and *Augustus*, as our Author here does: But this was not the Stile of the Ancients; they said, the Age of *Socrates* or *Plato*, and the Age of *Cicero* or *Cato*. The Advancement of Learning, Wit, or Genius, was never ascribed to *Augustus*, nor to *Alexander*, by the Ancients. The French have introduced this Stile; tho' it would have been more flattering to *Lewis XIVth*, to have said he was the first King, to whom the Rise and Flourishing of the Arts was owing; yet they seem to have been induced to it, that they might join these sounding Names, *Alexander*, *Augustus*, with that of their Monarch: But tho' this is the common Stile of Writers among the French, yet the best of them allow, that it was in Fact to *Mr. Colbert*, one of the best of Ministers, that the Encouragement of Arts and Sciences, and ingenious Men was owing, and not to his Master. He did what he could to give his Master's Vanity that useful Turn; and did himself, at his own Expence, as much, if not more, than his Master did in that Way. Let the Glory then be given to whom it is due; and let it not be purloined by others; by Tyrants, or their Abettors and Accomplices, to whom nothing else ever can be owing, but the Infamy of having done all in their Power to render Men Beasts, by treating them as such.

are possess'd of them, put a Value on their Productions, and thus encourage Genius in its noble Efforts and Labours. Finally, the Reputation and Recompences which afford the Learned more Ease and Leisure, lay them under the happy Necessity of making farther Advances. *But, says Mr. Racine, all these favourable Circumstances met together in the four famous Ages which have been mentioned.*

After Greece was delivered from the formidable Power of the *Persians*, she thought of nothing but enjoying in Tranquillity the Fruits of her Victories. Flourishing *Athens* quickly became the Mistress of the Sea, and gave Law to her Neighbours. Her Citizens, naturally gay and witty, gave themselves up to Pleasure, and the sprightly Arts, the natural Product of Pleasure. Hence those great Genius's whom After-ages have so much admired. But when *Antipater* cruelly oppressed Greece, Eloquence perished with *Demosthenes*, Poetry sunk, and there arose with *Zeno* and *Chrysippus* a dry, ungainly Philosophy, which banished all the Graces and Charms that adorned the Works of *Plato* and *Xenophon*.

While the *Romans* had powerful Enemies to struggle with, the Sciences were neglected. But no sooner had the Ruin of *Carthage* suffered them to breathe a little, than they began to study the Greek Learning: And when the Conquests of *Cæsar* and *Pompey* had made them Masters of the World, publick Joy made the fine Arts flourish: The slight Interruption of their Peace by the Civil Wars, did not make them quite lose all Taste of the Arts and Sciences; and when *Augustus* began to reign in Peace, they gave themselves up entirely to Joy; and then were

Poetry



Poetry and the elegant Arts brought to that Point of Perfection; which has been the Admiration of all succeeding Ages.

*Italy* was quiet and rich under the Pontificate of *Leo Xth*; and then the Arts flourished there: After his Death *Rome* was sack'd; *Florence*, the *Athens* of *Italy*, was enslaved; and then the Sciences began to droop.

When Cardinal *Richlieu*, after having subdued *Rochelle*, turned the whole Force of the Kingdom against foreign Enemies, his happy Success rendered his Administration very supportable; the Nation flourish'd, and Genius was cultivated. In fine, we know to what Pitch of Prosperity and Grandeur *France* was rais'd under *Lewis* the *XIVth*; and to what Height of Perfection the Arts and Sciences were all advanced in that great Reign.

After having shewn the Cause to which the Progress of the Sciences is chiefly owing, it is easy to see how Wars, Famine, and inclement Seasons may hurt and disturb them: But Mr. *Racine* pointed out another Cause of their Decline, much more to be apprehended; the Love of Points and of Tinsel; an affected Stile. 'Twas this chiefly which ruined them after *Augustus's* Death; or contributed more to their sad Fall than all the Cruelties of *Tiberius* and *Nero*. *Cicero* tells us, that *Phalereus* was the first who began to corrupt Eloquence in *Greece*, because he prefer'd tickling the Ear to moving the Heart: He rendered their Language soft and effeminate; and in the room of the true Force and Majesty, which had hitherto accompanied it, introduced a pretended Smoothness and Sweetness, that quite enervated it. Eloquence had the same Fate at *Rome*. For we read in a short Dialogue ascribed to *Quintilian*,  
that

that the Orators affected short sparkling Sentences, and placed the whole Beauty of Oratory in that: *In paucissimos sensus & angustas sententias detrudunt eloquentiam.* Every one knows that this Liking to Points, Conceits, and false Glare, hath become the prevailing Taste in *Italy*: *Tasso* first brought it into Fashion, and since this abominable Taste hath made such Progress among them, great Genius's have quite disappeared.

But notwithstanding the too evident Leaning among some Persons towards the Faults which have always brought on the Decadence of the Arts and Sciences, yet there are happily at present celebrated Authors, who prefer solid Beauty to the false Glittering which dazzles others.



HOMER



# HOMER *and* PLATO *com-* *par'd.*

By Mr. L'Abbe MASSIEN \*.

**I**T may perhaps surprise some, that I should undertake to compare together two great Men, who are commonly conceived to have been of so differing Characters. The Name of *Homer* presents to the Imagination all the Charms and Genius of Poetry : We immediately figure to ourselves an agreeable Writer, whose principal View was to please ; and who thought of nothing but entertaining our Fancy with the most enchanting Ideas. Whereas the very Name of *Plato* sets Philosophy before us with all its Gravity and Seriousness ; and we no sooner hear of him, than we represent to ourselves a solid Author, whose chief Aim was to instruct, and who continually applied himself to fortify and perfectionate our Reason.

But besides this Difference, which appears at first Sight between their Characters, it will probably be imagined impossible there should be any Resemblance between two Writers, one of whom

made

\* Memoirs, Tom. 2.



made, as it were, Conscience of eternally contradicting the other. One, when he first begins to read *Plato*, is not a little embarrassed to discover his real Opinion of *Homer*. Never did any one speak of him, either to his Advantage or Disadvantage, in a more excessive Manner. According to this Author, in some of his Treatises, *Homer* is the most excellent, the most divine of all Poets: He is the first among all the Wise and Learned: His Works comprehend the Whole of human and divine Philosophy. But if we take *Homer's* Character from the same Author, in other Parts of his Writings, the same *Homer* is the most dangerous of all Writers: His Works can only spoil the Imagination and corrupt the Heart; and he is a publick Nuisance, whose Writings ought to be banish'd out of all well govern'd States. How is it possible to reconcile such contradictory Judgments in Appearance? Nothing is more easy, if we may depend upon those learned Men who have studied *Plato* most. We must explain the Passages in which he praises *Homer*, by those in which he blames him. In the former he is ironical, in the latter he is serious. And of this we cannot doubt, if we look a little into his Books of a Republick; into the first, second and third principally, where he gives Reasons for his Sentiments, and makes a long Enumeration of all the Passages he thinks condemnable in this famous Poet. Another Proof that the Encomiums he sometimes heaps upon *Homer*, are not serious, is, that he puts them in the Mouth of *Socrates*, who was naturally a Mocker, as is well known; and who, agreeably to that Character, often says the very contrary to what he thinks. A very convenient Character (by the by) for reconciling all the Passages

in general of *Plato*, where there is any seeming Contrariety.

But on the other Side, if it be certain, that *Plato* had at Bottom so very bad an Opinion of *Homer*, how can it be credible that he should have chosen him for his Model? What Probability is there that he would have declaimed so extravagantly against a Writer whom he had taken for his Pattern to imitate? Is it to be supposed that he would have had Recourse to so open an Artifice, in order to impose upon his Readers? Can we suspect so great a Philosopher of a Jealousy so far beneath him? Can we induce ourselves to imagine, that a Genius of the first Order, an Ancient, could have been capable of a Weakness scarcely pardonable in the meanest Genius, and a Modern?

However that may be, or whatever Motives *Plato* may have had, it is visible that he hath been obliged to *Homer* for his greatest Beauties. One cannot read their Works, without perceiving how much he is indebted to him. Tho' this Opinion may appear singular, yet it hath been maintained by many illustrious Ancients. *Pamilius* found so great a Conformity between these two Authors, that he used to call *Plato* the *Homer* of the Philosophers. *His Stile*, says *Cicero*, *to judge of it by the Rapidity with which it flows, and the luminous Expressions with which it abounds, is rather Poetry than Prose.* *Dionysius Halicarnassensis* assures us, that *Plato* looked upon *Homer* with the Eyes of a Rival; and that he has attack'd him often with such Severity for no other Reason, than that his Glory hurt him. *Heracledes* goes farther; he does not hesitate to affirm, that *Plato* was the most ungrateful of Men, for having on so many Occasions spoken

ill of the Person, in the World, he ought in Gratitude to have praised the most. But let us rather hear *Longinus*, whose Testimony may be the more relied upon, as it has less the Air of Inveective, and appears more remote from Partiality. *All the best Writers*, says he, *have been great Imitators of Homer: But it is Plato that has imitated him most. For from this Source has he drawn many beautiful Streams, &c.* Thus in ancient Times was it commonly thought that these great Men had a strong Resemblance one to the other. But the Misfortune is, that these excellent Criticks have satisfy'd themselves with telling us, they thought so, without giving us their Reasons. I am to attempt here to supply their Silence in this Respect: And if I should fail in proving their Sentiment, let none conceive a disadvantageous Notion of it on that account; but let all the Blame be laid upon the bad Arguments I may bring to support what they maintained.

*The Division of this Discourse.*

It may be said, in general, that all great Genius's have some Resemblance: Nature hath, as it were, stamp'd them with one common Mark. However different their distinguishing Talents may have been; their Superiority above all others makes some common Likeness among them: But this general Affinity or Resemblance is not all we find between *Homer* and *Plato*: They are like one another in many particular Respects. Three Things principally characterise Writers. The Substance of their Doctrine or Sentiments; their Manner of teaching it; and their Stile. Now



if we compare *Homer* and *Plato*, we shall find that it is hardly possible to imagine an exacter Conformity between two Writers in these three Points, than may be observed between them.

## PART I.

They teach us the same Truths. Who knows not that all the Obligations of Mankind, either regard Religion, the State, or common, civil Life? All the Instructions that can be given us, turn either upon the Duties Men owe to God, from whom they derive all; to their Country, in whose Bosom they are born and live; or to other Men, with whom they are united by the Ties of Humanity. But all Antiquity hath ever considered *Homer* and *Plato* as the best of Teachers, with respect to all these Obligations and Duties. Let us begin with their Sentiments about Religion.

It can't be disown'd, that the Theology of *Homer* hath a strong Relish of the Age and Country in which he liv'd. It is stuff'd with extravagant Fables: There is even some Probability, that he did not wholly confine himself to those which were publickly believed; but that he has added not a few to them from his own Invention: And if some may be excus'd for the Sake of the allegorical Meanings couched under them; yet we are forced by the Strength of Evidence, as it were, to pass a Sentence of Condemnation against the rest. Yet, on the other hand, Truth seems sometimes to pierce thro' the Clouds in which *Homer* had enwrapped it. Amidst that Heap of fabulous Divinities which he employs to embellish his Poems, one cannot help thinking he  
sees

sees now and then some faint Glimpses of his Knowledge of the true God. In many Passages he uses the Name which characterises him. *Know*, says *Agamemnon* to *Achilles*, *that if you have Valour, you ought not to glory in it, it is from God you have it.* — *No, my Son*, says *Phaenro* to the same *Hero*, *I cannot persuade myself to leave you, tho' God should promise to deliver me, on that Condition, from the Infirmities of old Age, and to restore me to my former Youth and Vigour.* — *Come*, says *Polydamas* to the *Trojans*, *let us attack the Greeks in their Vessels, and let us see if it is not there that God prepares Victory to us.* If this great Poet had always expressed himself in this Manner, there would have been no Reason to have accused him of filling his Writings with ridiculous and monstrous Divinities.

What did *Plato*, who set himself to read *Homer*, with all the happiest Dispositions and Qualities of Mind ; with a most solid and penetrating, accurate Discernment ? He separated the Good from the Bad, Truth from Falshood. He refined all those Ideas and Expressions which disfigured the Divinity, and reduced them to a philosophical Precision : And how happy had he been, if he had always been able to avoid the Shelves upon which his Master was driven ! But it must be acknowledg'd, that the Writings of *Plato*, with regard to the Sovereign Being, have often need of an Apology as well as those of *Homer*. The sublimest Truths in this Philosopher are mixed with a great number of Errors. If, sometimes, he speaks of God as one enlightened by the Gospel would do ; yet, to our great Astonishment, he often relapses into the most corrupt and ignorant Language of Paganism. He always speaks of the Gods, as if he had really

believ'd a Plurality of them; he distinguishes them by different Names, and assigns to every one his peculiar Attributes and Prerogatives. Whether it was, that the Truth, of which he had but a faint View, was not able to resist the Force of early Prejudices; or that the System of Religion he had formed to himself, was from Time to Time overpower'd in his Mind by the Weight of the prevailing Theology, which however absurd it may be, never fails to have an Empire, even over the best cultivated Minds, that they cannot wholly shake off; or, whether for political Reasons he durst not declare himself too openly and uniformly, and Fear of the Fate of *Socrates* had made him conform in Appearance, at least, to the receiv'd Belief; or whether, in fine, it be the Destiny of those great Genius's, who dare approach the Divinity with their unassisted Reason, to be so dazzled by the Majesty with which he is surrounded, as to become giddy, and fall from the brightest Light into the profoundest Darknesh. But it is not the Question we are now engaged in, to enquire whether *Homer* and *Plato* have reasoned consistently about the Divine Nature: We have only proposed to examine, Whether their Theology be not, in the main Articles, much the same.

'Tis past doubt, that there is in their Writings, a Description of one Sovereign Being, infinitely exalted above all others. They acknowledge the Existence of Spirits, which hold, as it were, the middle Rank between the supreme first Cause and Man, whom they call sometimes Gods, and sometimes Demons or Genii. They teach the Subordination of these Intelligences to the supreme Being, who employs them as his Ministers, to execute his Commands and Designs.  
They



They assert, that in Quality of the Universal Cause, he produces all the Good, and permits all the Evil that happens in the World: That at his Will and Pleasure, and by his absolute Power, he sends abroad a Spirit of Prudence, and a Spirit of Folly and Blindness, Prosperity and Adversity, Victories and Defeats: That Men being dependent upon the spiritual Powers above them, ought to honour these Beings with Sacrifices, and invoke their Favour and Protection by Prayers.

Both these Authors endeavour to excite Piety by the Thoughts of another World, which they propose to our Hopes and Fears. They teach us, that the Soul is distinct from the Body; and that when the Soul is separated from the Body, it continues to exist; that Rewards and Punishments await us after Death, according to the good or bad Use we make of this Life: That departed Spirits, on certain Occasions, and for particular Reasons, appear to the Living, in whose Interests they are yet concerned, or from whom they expect any Succour. This Doctrine, *Plato*, according to several great Criticks, had learned from the *Egyptians*: And in the 23d Book of the *Iliad*, the Soul of *Patroclus* appears to *Achilles*, and supplicates him to render Funeral Honours to his Body so soon as possible. They equally agree in all other Things relating to the Gods, or human Duties with regard to them.

Nor is the Concord between them, with Relation to the Duty one owes to his Country, less remarkable. They would have every one always ready to fly at the Command of the common Parent, and to undertake the Office or Post to which she calls: Always ready to fight; and if it be necessary, to sacrifice Life for her. They make sacred Regard to the Laws, the Founda-

tion of publick Felicity. Throughout the whole of their Writings they secure Authority to Sovereigns, and prescribe Submission and Obedience to Subjects. The Welfare of the whole Body, depends, according to their Doctrine, upon perfect Harmony, not only between the Head and the Members, but amongst the Members themselves. They consider Union in a State, in general, as what constitutes its Strength and Happiness; and Faction as a sure Cause of Weakness, and a perpetual Source of Calamities. As to different Forms of Government, they thought none more perfect than Monarchy; and this beautiful Saying of *Homer*, *That nothing is more dangerous than a Division of Sovereignty: Let there then be but one King, one Master*, is with *Plato* an eternal Maxim, extending throughout all Nature: For, according to him, there is but one Sovereign, whether in the World, and that is God; or in a Civil State, and that is the Prince; or, in the Heart of Man, which he considers as a little World or State, and that is Reason. A most sublime, magnificent Idea, to which the Works of *Homer* and *Plato* are incessantly conducting their Readers!

Let me now speak of the Directions they give to Man with Regard to private Life. Here they require of Man, above all things, to accustom himself to pay due Respect to the Dignity of his Nature, and due Honour to the Judgments of others. They recommend this Respect as the properest Restraint from doing any Thing of which we would be ashamed at the Tribunal of Conscience, or of the World. They proportion the Obligations of Duties to the Ties of Blood, Affinity, and Friendship. And they are excellent Masters in all Matters relative to Decorum; they

they give as admirable Rules of Conduct in all the different Ages, Relations, and Characters of Life. They demand in old Persons Mildness, Condescension, and Patience towards young People; and in the latter Respect, Docility, and Gratitude towards the Aged; and not satisfied with giving us Lessons upon this last Head, they present us with Models. *Socrates*, who in his advanc'd Years loves the Society of the Young, bears with their Faults, combats their Passions and Prejudices; and by Means of his ever victorious Eloquence, maintains a gentle Empire over their Minds, has very much the Air of *Nestor*, who making Use of the Authority his Age gave him, represents to Kings and Subjects their Duties, reprimands their Divisions, condemns their Excesses and Follies, and makes himself Master of their Souls by his insinuating Words, which had no less Force than Sweetness.

## PART II.

But if *Homer* and *Plato* resemble one the other so nearly in the Essentials of their Doctrine, they resemble one another no less in their Manner of Teaching. They well knew that Instructions, if not accompanied with a great deal of Art, and many Charms, never fail to have an Effect very opposite to the Intention of the Teachers, and to hurt the Delicacy, instead of correcting the Vices of Mankind. They therefore proposed to instruct by diverting, and to hide Precepts under the Allure of Pleasure: And because, among all the different Ways of Writing, none is more proper to attract the Reader's Attention, than that in which Imitation and Fiction have a  
great



great Share, 'tis to this principally they had Recourse. They are the two Writers who have most employ'd Allegory, and with the best Success.

The Power of Imitation over Mankind is confessed. It presents us with I know not what Charms, which we cannot resist. So great is its Force, that it can give Beauty to Objects the most horrible in themselves: And here perhaps lies the principal Source of those inexpressible Beauties in the Writings of *Homer* and *Plato*, which have rendered them for so many Ages the unfading Delight of all People of Taste. Their Works abound with the most perfect Pictures human Genius hath ever been able to produce, either with Regard to the General Ordonnance, the particular Figures, or the accessory Ornaments with which the principal Subjects in these Master-pieces of Invention are embellished.

Throughout the Whole, Mankind are painted agreeably to Truth and Nature, and in the most lively Colours.

In the Works of *Homer*, it is not *Homer* we read: 'Tis *Agamemnon*, *Achilles*, *Nestor*, or *Ulysses*, we see and hear speak to us. We follow them through all their Steps and Motions: We are interested in all their Passions and Concerns, or Agitations: We are present with them at their Deliberations, in their Battels, at their Feasts and their Sacrifices.

In the Works of *Plato*, *Plato* himself does not appear, he is not perceiv'd: 'Tis *Socrates*, *Timeus*, *Agathon*, or *Alcibiades* who speaks and acts. One is admitted into familiar Conversation with them; into all their Secrets and Resolutions: We find ourselves, as it were, in Company

pany with them at Table, in their Walks, at publick Feasts, or in Prison: We are not only Witnesses to their Manner of Living, but likewise to that in which they died.

In the Writings of both, all is alive and in Action. Infomuch, that as Antiquity has said of *Homer*, *That he was the most Dramatick of Poets, without excepting even the Tragick Writers*, we may say with equal Justice of *Plato*, *That of all Writers in Prose, he is the most Dramatical*. All the Difference between them is, that the one presents us with lively Portraits of Heroes, who sought Glory amidst Tumults and Dangers; and the other entertains us with a natural Picture of those Sages, who in their quiet Conferences sought after Truth and Knowledge.

Another most essential Way of attaching Readers, is by Fiction. Experience tells us, that all Men have naturally a Taste for Tales and Fables. In vain do we affect Airs of Gravity, we are all Children in this Respect. A String of extravagant Adventures, however void of Probability, if there be but enough of the Marvellous, has more Force to draw our Attention, than the wisest and most reasonable Discourse. But Fiction has this Advantage, that by accommodating itself to our Weakness, it turns to our Advantage. It presents us with Falshood in Appearance, but Truth at Bottom.

*Homer* is generally thought the Writer who hath best understood how to use those ingenious Symbols. But I know not if *Plato* may not dispute this Glory with him. The Writings of this Philosopher are full of Allegories. Time does not allow me to enter into a Detail of those which are wholly of his own Invention. I re-  
strict

strict myself to some, in which he seems to have copied after *Homer*.

*Homer* gives Wings or a Chariot to the greater Part of his Divinity. *Plato* does the same, with Regard to the Soul of Man. Not satisfied with giving it Wings, he gives it a compleat Equipage, a Chariot, two Horses, and a Charioteer.

*Chimera* in *Homer* is a Monster with a Lion's Head, the Belly of a Goat, and the Tail of a Dragon. And what is Man according to our Philosopher? A monstrous Assemblage compounded of three different Natures, and having many Heads, some of which are Heads of tame, and others of savage Animals.

We read in *Homer* that *Menos*, *Æacus*, and *Rhadamanthus*, are the Judges of Hell. *Plato* teaches us, how they came to that formidable Dignity, and he seems dispos'd to make his Tale pass for Truth. *Hearken a little to a most instructive Discourse*, says *Socrates*, *a Discourse*, I believe, ye will take to be a Fable, but I give it you for Verity. After *Jupiter*, *Neptune*, and *Pluto*, had divided their Father's Kingdom among them, they fixed an unalterable Decree, that those who had led a pure and irreproachable Life here, should after Death go into a most delicious Retreat, where they should enjoy uninterrupted Felicity: And that those, on the other hand, who had lived unjustly and impiously here, should be precipitated into the Regions of *Tartarus*, where they should suffer horrible Torments. That an irreversible Judgment should thus decide the eternal Lot of both. In the Reign of *Saturn*, and at the Beginning of *Jupiter's*, Men were judg'd while they were yet alive, or at the Point of dying, and the Judges were living Persons. But *Pluto*  
and



and his Ministers, who were charged with the Execution of the Sentences that were thus passed, complained to Jupiter, that great Numbers of Dead were sent to them very unjustly judged. This is occasioned, says Jupiter, both because those who judge, and those who are judged, are cloathed with Bodies, and such an external Appearance, as hinders the one from discerning the Truth, and the other from appearing what they really are. In order to remedy this Disorder, I therefore ordain, that, for the Future, Men be judged after their Death, and that my Sons, Minos, Æacus, and Rhadamanthus, to whom I commit this important Jurisdiction, shall not exercise it till they themselves be dead.

In the System of our Poet, our Prayers are the Daughters of Jupiter and our Indigence. This Fable gave a Handle to our Philosopher to imagine one relative to the Origin of Love, which, tho' quite different from all those contrived by the Poets on this Subject, is neither less poetical, nor less apposite to paint out to us all the Contrarieties in the Nature of this fantastical Passion. The Day that gave Birth to Venus, says he, the Immortals celebrated a solemn Banquet in Honour of her Birth. All the Gods were there, and among the rest the God of Riches. Poverty stood at the Gate during the Repast, to wait till it should be over, and to share of the Remains. But the God of Wealth having happened to drink too much Nectar (for then there was no Wine) lay down in Jupiter's Garden, and fell asleep. Poverty thought this a favourable Occasion to get herself a Child by this God; and approaching the God softly, well knew how to please him by certain engaging Methods, and thence came Love into the World. This little God hath ever since he  
was

*was born attached himself to Venus, and attended in her Train, both because he was born on the same Day, and because, being naturally fond of Beauty, he loved this Goddess most passionately. He has a great deal both of his Father and of his Mother, &c.*

'Tis thus *Plato* knew how to take the Air of *Homer* when he pleased: But to resemble him yet more nearly, as this Poet has put into his Poems a great many Fictions, which one knows not well what to make of; and which open a large Field to Conjectures; so hath this Philosopher filled his Prose with a large Quantity of Allegories, which are in the Judgment of the ablest Criticks, almost quite unintelligible, and very fit to exercise the Divination of his Readers. Such, among others, is that towards the End of the Ninth Book of his Republick. *Necessity*, says he, *has three Daughters, which are the three Fates, Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos. They turn, instead of a Distaff, the Axle of the World and the eight Heavens. These Goddesses are cloathed with white Raiments, and seated upon Thrones with Crowns on their Heads. They are placed at equal Distances upon these mighty Orbs, which they balance and move. Upon each of which Orbs there is a Siren that sings with all her Force. The Destinies keep Consort with the Song, and all these different Voices make one perfect Harmony. The Remainder is yet more ænigmatical, and is too long to be repeated. I dare answer for it, that in Homer, and perhaps in all the Poets together, there is not a Fiction surpassing this, either in the Singularity of the Ideas, or in Length and Obscurity.*

## PART III.

The last Sort of Resemblance we find between *Homer* and *Plato*, is in Stile: A Resemblance so much the more likely to make an Impression, that it makes itself felt in a more continued Manner. They have both wrote in a Stile of the same Kind, *i. e.* In that which is the Mean between the Austere and the Florid; and which has the Perfections, without the Faults of both. By the Consent of all the Criticks, of all the Writers in this temperated Manner, the most eminent is *Homer*; and he, who comes the nearest to him, *Plato*. There is in their Stiles the same Purity, the same Sweetness, the same Copiousness, the same Grandeur, and the same Melody.

But over and above this general Affinity, their Stiles have a more particular Likeness. *Plato* is ever embellishing his Writings with Citations from *Homer*. His Works abound with Verses quoted from *Homer*. There are twenty-six in his *Ion*, and thirty in his *Gorgias*, which are not the two longest of his Dialogues. And sometimes these Passages of *Homer* have more Delicacy and Grace, as they are placed by *Plato*, than in the Original, from whence they are transplanted.

But he is not satisfied with quoting *Homer*. One may say he aimed at transforming his Stile into that of this Poet, by borrowing Expressions from him, which he enchases into his own, in such a Manner, that both make but one entire Body. The interweaving of it is almost imperceptible, if one be not, by a long Course of reading,



reading, very familiarly acquainted with both these famous Authors.

In fine, where *Plato* neither cites, nor copies *Homer*, his Stile is however *Homerical*. *Plato* had naturally a Turn for Poetry; it was the Object of his earliest Love. While yet very young he composed Verses; and not content with employing his Poetick Genius upon gallant Subjects, he even attempted Tragedy and Epick Poetry: But his Success did not answer his Hopes. He compared his Productions with those of *Homer*, and perceived the Difference. Convinc'd that it would be in vain to combat with a Conqueror, to whom, during four or five Centuries, the Honour of unequall'd had been render'd by common Suffrage, he quited this Manner of Composition, in which he found he could be but second, and applied himself to another, in which he despair'd not of being the first. His Despair carried him so far, as to make him condemn all his Verses to the Flames: But in burning them he could not forbear repeating a Passage from the Poet who was the Cause of his Chagrin, viz. The Verses which *Homer* puts in the Mouth of *Thetis*, when she went to ask Arms from *Vulcan* for her Son.

*Vulcan draw near, 'tis Thetis asks your Aid.*

*Plato* only put his own Name in place of the Goddess's.

If we may believe the Ancients, the Discontent Poetry had created him in his Youth, was the Reason of his inveighing so vehemently against the Art in his more advanced Years. In which, say they, he acted like Lovers, who speak ill of the

the Persons whose Affections they are not able to win.

But *Plato*, when he abandon'd Poetry, did not lose his Taste for it. He carried that Taste with him into his Prose Compositions ; and there we may find frequent Instances of his first Passion. Never was Stile more Poetick : For it is well known what makes the Essence of Poesy. It is not merely the Measure and Arrangement of Words : 'Tis chiefly the Pompousness of the Language, the Boldness of the Figures, the Vivacity of the Descriptions ; and above all, a Kind of Warmth that animates the whole Discourse. Now all these Qualities meet in *Plato* to a very high Degree. Next to *Homer* he is the Writer who hath carried the Magnificence of Stile to the highest Pitch. His Stile was in ancient Times thought so majestick, that it was commonly said, " That if *Jupiter* " should ever deign to speak *Greek*, he would " speak like *Plato*.

As to the Daringness of his Figures, he push'd that, perhaps to an Extreme of Audacity. He calls the Tablets upon which the publick Resolutions were engraved, Monuments of *Cypress*. In his Stile an old Tradition is whiten'd by Age : *Jupiter's* Eagle is a winged Car : And the Gods assembled upon *Olympus*, make a Host of Gods. In his Language, Wine is not simply a violent Liquor, it is a God furious and boiling with Rage : And the Water pour'd into it, to moderate it, is a sedate, calm Divinity, which corrects and chastises its Fury.

How shall I express the Liveliness of his Descriptions ? What can be more lively or pleasing, than that in the Beginning of his *Phædrus*, representing the Place where the Dialogue passed?

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“ Good God! says *Socrates*, what a beautiful  
 “ Spot is this! How charming is this lofty and  
 “ luxuriant Plane Tree to the Eye! Nor does  
 “ this other Tree less please by its Stateliness, and  
 “ the Redundancy of its Leaves. The Flowers  
 “ with which the Ground is bedecked, spread  
 “ a delightful Perfume all around. How agree-  
 “ able is that Fountain from which flows such  
 “ Plenty of pure and fresh Water! The Offer-  
 “ ings worthy of the Gods, with which its  
 “ Banks are array’d, shew that it is devoted to  
 “ the Nymphs and the River *Achelous*. Don’t  
 “ you feel that gentle Zephyre which re-  
 “ freshes the Air we respire, and which makes  
 “ so harmonious a Consort with the Grasshoppers?  
 “ But, what is the principal Charm in this Place,  
 “ is the soft Declension that Nature seems to  
 “ have all cover’d with the smoothest Pile  
 “ to invite Passengers to sweet Repose upon  
 “ it. No, *Phædrus*, you cannot surely conduct  
 “ me to a more delicious Place.” Add to all  
 this, that *Plato* is often transported by a Divine  
 Enthusiasm. In many Passages of his Works, it is  
 not a Philosopher who dogmatizes coolly, and  
 retails fine Maxims; it is a Priest inspired with  
 a sacred Fury, who cannot contain the God of  
 which he is full, and who breaks forth in O-  
 racles. We therefore sometimes find *Socrates*  
 apologizing for his Transports. “ Silence, hear-  
 “ ken, says he, in the same Dialogue I have been  
 “ just quoting, the Subject I am upon is alto-  
 “ gether Divine; and therefore be not surpris’d  
 “ if I speak like one inspired by some Divi-  
 “ nity, and if my Language is quite Dithyram-  
 “ bick.” And it is for the same Reason he often  
 implores the Assistance of the Muses, as if the  
 Dia-



Dialogue he was entering upon were not in Prose, but a Poem. "Ye Muses, *says he*, in "the same Place, Ye charming Goddesses of "Harmony, I invoke you; come to me, and "support me in the Execution of my Enter- "prize."

See then some of the Features in which *Ho-mer* and *Plato* resemble one another. Two great Men, who, all Things considered, do Honour to Humanity, whose few Defects are compensated by numberless Beauties; who have both merited, by the unanimous Consent of all Ages, the glorious Name of *Divine*: And who are justly comparable one to the other, whether we consider the Grandeur, Elevation and Fecundity of their Genius's, or the immense Extent of their Learning and Knowledge; who before any Rules were composed, were each in his Kind the Models upon which Rules have been formed; Writers who have found the Secret of uniting in their Compositions all the Treasures of the richest and most abundant of Languages: And the former of whom has, perhaps, no other Advantage above the other, but what every excellent Original necessarily has above its best Copy (a).

K 2

(a) See in my Lord *Shaftsbury's* Advice to an Author, yet more profound Observations upon] what] he calls the Resemblance between the Lineage of Philosophy and that of Poetry, as derived from their two chief Founders or Patriarchs; in whose Loins the several Races lay as it were inclosed. For as the *Grand Postick Sire* was, by the Consent of all Antiquity, allowed to have furnished Subject both to the Tragick, the Comick, and every other Kind of genuine Poetry; so the *Philosophical Patriarch*

in the same Manner, containing within himself the several Genius's of Philosophy, gave Rise to all those several Manners in which that Science was delivered. This beautiful Reflexion is illustrated and proved by his Lordship at great Length. See *Advice to an Author*, p. 24, &c. and Vol. 3. p. 248. with the ancient Authorities there quoted.



A DIS-



*A DISCOURSE upon the Use  
Plato made of the Poets.*

*By Mr. L'Abbe FRAQUIER.\**

I Have been often led to consider what it is that gives such peculiar Charms to the Dialogues of *Plato*; or how it is, that the most profound, abstruse, and serious Subjects, are so agreeably treated in this Author, that even those are not read with half so much Pleasure, whose principal View it is to please and amuse by their Writings: And I think I have discovered several Sources of these particular Beauties; the principal of which is, in my Judgment, that Contrast of Characters to be found in all his Dialogues. Some Personages in them are so full of themselves, that they think they know every thing to the Bottom, and yet they are found to be very narrow and superficial Thinkers by *Socrates*, who is every where the chief Actor, and who, pretending to understand nothing, but to be very fond of Learning, has however a  
K 3 well-

\* *Memoirs of Literature*, T. 2. p. 113.



well-digested System in his Head, which in his artful Manner of developing it, serves at once to display the right Road Men ought to take, and to shew his Opponents how sadly ill-conducted Reason misleads, especially when it is accompanied with Arrogancy, and an over-weening Conceit of one's own Abilities. That particular Character of the *Sophists* has something in it so shocking, that nothing can be more agreeable, than to see their Pride and Ostentation confounded by one, who, under Appearance of the greatest Simplicity, hath an exhaustless Fund of Knowledge and Wisdom, which he only hides, in order to attack Error more successfully. Here is the Character opposite to Arrogance. It is Irony, according to *Aristotle's* Definition; which supposes him who is perfect Master of it to have a very solid Judgment, joined with an Address and Subtlety, and a Fund of Humour and Pleasantry, of which direct Eloquence is not susceptible. And this Character, well managed, is by itself capable of rendering Dialogue exceeding agreeable. It will not only please them who can enter into the Knack and Artifice of it, but even them who are Strangers to its artful *Ruses*. Even as good Musick, or fine Pictures charm those who only judge by Sentiment and Feeling, without the Assistance of Rules, as well as the Intelligent in these Arts.

But besides the Irony of *Socrates*, conducted by *Plato*, with such wonderful Dexterity; we may observe in the Writings of this Philosopher, that the Imagination is highly enriched and entertained by them, while the Understanding is most abundantly feasted with its proper Food, solid Maxims and just Reasonings. This Riches and Magnificence does not consist merely in the  
Elegance

Elegance and Purity of his Stile, in a happy Choice of Metaphors, in a proper Arrangement of Words and Phrases; nor yet in that admirable Copiousness, which hath made *Longinus* and *Quintilian* rank *Plato* in the Sphere with *Homer*. A great Part of those Beauties are found in *Cicero*, but surely one does not feel there that Force and Energy, with which *Plato* every where strikes us.

To what then shall we refer those Charms, which are to him what *Venus's* Girdle is to *Juno* in *Homer*? In what Garden hath he gathered the many delightful Flowers with which his Works are garnished? In that of the Muses undoubtedly, to use *Pindar's* Phrase; it is by his Commerce with the Poets that he has ramass'd all the Riches which he diffuses in his Works with so much Judgment and Address.

For there are two Ways of making use of the Poets; one simple and direct, the other indirect and artful. The first has nothing singular in it, and is well known to every one. It consists in quoting, for instance, Verses of *Homer*, whether to support a Sentiment by the Authority of this great Poet, or to illustrate it and cast a beautiful Light upon it; or whether, finally, to adorn one's Discourse, and keep up the Reader's Attention. Poetry, ancient Poetry in particular, has often great Weight; but it has at the same Time always something in it more sprightly and engaging than Prose. One or more Verses seasonably applied, awaken the Soul, refresh it, and restore that Gaiety to it, which would otherwise be lost by long Attention.

This Care to insert Verses in grave Discourses, is very remarkable in *Cicero's* Writings; and whether he himself translates the ancient *Greek*

Poets, at which he was more dexterous than is commonly imagined ; or whether he makes use of the Translations old *Latin* Poets had made of them, by this Means he gives to his Works an Air of Erudition and Antiquity, which adds not a little to their Merit. *Plato* does the same in some Parts of his Writings, as in the first Book of a Republick, where he quotes, in a very proper Place, a Passage of *Pindar* in Praise of Virtue. For the aged *Cephaëles* having said, that one of the great Advantages of Riches consisted in our not being exposed to the Danger of those Temptations to unjust Actions, which attend pinching Circumstances ; and consequently in being deliver'd from the Horrors of fearful Guilt in the Decline of Life ; at which Time, says he, the Punishments of a future Life, which one had hitherto regarded as *Chimæra's*, never fail to appear to us in a stronger Light, whether thro' the Weakness, or thro' the greater Sincerity and Clearness of the Understanding, to the great Disturbance of our Tranquillity and Repose ; for those whose Consciences do not reproach them, live in sweet Hopes, according to that Saying of *Pindar* : *The Persons whose Lives have been spent in Innocence, and who have endeavoured honestly to fulfil their Duties to God and Man, preserve in their Minds a cheerful Hope, which is the Support and Consolation of their old Age : A comfortable Hope, which is the best Nurse to the Aged ; and besides, gives a due Poise to the Thoughts of Men, in all the various Agitations, to which they are obnoxious.* I the more willingly cite this Passage, as it is a Fragment of a Piece Time has destroyed. I don't mention here the Verses of *Homer*, *Hesiod*, *Theognis*, *Tyrteus*, and others we find scattered thro' his Writings : He often cites those



those Poets only to refute them, and to put in the Room of an impious Theology, and corrupted Morality, a purer Doctrine concerning Duties, and a Theology more refined from the profane Imaginations of Men.

Let us now consider what is more subtle and artful in his Manner of employing the Poets, which we may call an indirect Manner, because still preserving the original Sense of the Poet, it is, however, by a dexterous Application, turned to another Use; so that an intelligent Reader hath the double Pleasure of perceiving the Poet's primary Design, and the skilful, ingenious new Turn given to it. He sees at once the Beauty of the original Thought, and the Aptitude of the Application made of it; and knows not what to admire most; the first Inventor, or him who shews no less Ingenuity in the Choice of the Comparison. The Sentiment has thus triple Charms: And in this lies one great Part of the Beauties and Graces *Plato's* intelligent Readers discover in his Writings: For it must be owned, that this may not be discerned at the first Reading; nay, perhaps, not after frequent reading, unless one being much conversant in the ancient Poets, has their Verses fresh in his Memory, when he meets with ingenious Applications of them. And we may apply here, what *Plato* is reported to have said of Philosophy, that none ought to attempt the Study of it, if he be not previously acquainted with all the ingenious Sciences. But I am speaking of a Matter of Taste, and by consequence so obscure as to stand in need of Illustration by Examples. I shall therefore single out one or two of the more remarkable, and which it will be easiest to set in their full Light; and I dare flatter myself, that this Society

Society will not think their Time ill employ'd in recalling to Mind the agreeable Ideas which I shall endeavour to set before them. We may discern the good Use *Plato* has made of the Poets, by this one Thing, that in the Room of their extravagant Opinions about the Gods and Mortals, and instead of the Labour they bestow to agitate dangerous Passions, which Philosophy endeavours to eradicate, or at least to keep quiet, he hath chosen from their Writings the Passages fullest of Beauty and Instruction, and hath render'd them by his Application yet more charming and captivating.

In the Dialogue of *Plato* intituled *the Second Alcibiades*, *Socrates* rencounters *Alcibiades* crown'd with Flowers, according to the Custom of those who went to the Temple to pay their Devotions and Offerings. He accosts him, and entering into Conversation with him, by the ordinary Arts of his Irony, and that subtle Concatenation of Questions and Answers, by which he gained his Point with the most celebrated *Sophists*, he brings the young Man to perceive and acknowledge his Uncertainty about what he ought to ask from the Gods; not being able to determine, whether what he was to pray for might not prove very disadvantageous to him, as it happened to *Oedipus*, whom the Gods, by granting him the Accomplishment of his Prayers, made an Example of the Misfortunes into which rash and indiscreet Wishes often lead inconsiderate Mortals. *Alcibiades*, at the Conclusion of this Conference, to recompence *Socrates* for the sage Counsel he had given him, put on his Head the Crown he was carrying to the Temple to adorn the Altar of the God, to whom he was to address his Supplications. And he adds, *We shall find*

find other Crowns for the Gods, when the Time of which you have spoken comes, and brings us this sage Instructor in the Matter of Prayer: And would to Heaven he may not long delay to come to us! I receive, replied Socrates, your Present most chearfully. Nay, from this Crown I draw such a happy Presage, as Creon did of old upon meeting Tiresias with the golden Crown the Athenians had honoured him with for a Victory he had gain'd them. He interpreted this rencontre in his own Favour, saying, it gave him good Hopes: "For we are yet, as you know, said he, in the midst of a terrible Tempest. Thebes was indeed at this Time in a terrible Uncertainty, not knowing what might be the Event of the Siege laid to it by a powerful Army; or what the Hatred of two Brothers might produce, no Enmity being so outrageous and implacable as that which, having a Crown for its Incentive, hath burst the Bonds of Blood. I am in no less Suspense, continued Socrates, than Creon was, with Regard to the Conquest I would gladly make of all the Enemies with which you are invironed."

In order to discover all the hidden Beauties of this Application, which I have picked out as one of the plainest, because explained by *Plato* himself at more length than the others, we must call to mind the *Phœnicians* of *Euripides*, in which Piece, one of the most beautiful of Antiquity, the Poet supposes *Creon*, by the Order of *Eteocles*, going to consult *Tiresias* about the Fate of *Thebes*, to find him crown'd with a Crown of Gold the *Athenians* had presented him with, as the principal Booty they had made in a Victory over the Army of *Eumolpus*, obtained chiefly by his Valour, and to have thus addressed him: *The Crown*



*Crown you wear is to me a good Omen, being the Mark of Victory, for you know we are in a terrible Tempest, and that Thebes hath a powerful Assault to resist.*

May we not bestow some little Time in developing the many particular Beauties in this one Allusion, and fully unfolding its Meaning, which may perhaps not be wholly comprehended without considerable Attention? For if it be allowed to Painters and Sculptors to dwell long upon a Piece of ancient Painting and Sculpture, however dismember'd and spoil'd by the Injuries of Time; and if it be permitted to some *Italian* Authors to compose large Books upon one Sonnet of *Petrarch*, may it not be permitted to us to indulge our selves in the Pleasure of searching with some Curiosity, into the singular Beauties which are sometimes hid in the smallest Strokes of the great Masters of ancient Times?

*Socrates* perceived in *Alcibiades* all the Accomplishments that can meet in one Person; Beauty, Valour, Strength, Wealth, illustrious Birth, and an Ambition yet nobler than his Descent, and all the Talents requisite to produce these Advantages in their highest Lustre and Glory. He well understood, that as weak feeble Minds seldom bring forth any thing very considerable, whether good or bad; so Persons in whom Nature is strong and aspiring, do not satisfy themselves with ordinary Efforts, but being daring in good as well as in bad, commonly act the highest Parts in Peace and in War. *Socrates*, who had nothing in View but the good of his Fellow-Citizens, thought it his Duty to use his best Endeavours to turn the Thoughts and Inclinations of this Youth towards Virtue, who became, as *Valerius Maximus* remarks,  
equally

equally the Object of Hatred and Admiration to his Country. *Socrates* foresaw the Miseries into which *Alcibiades* was likely to plunge himself, and the Perplexities he might involve his Country in, if the Love of Pleasure should get the Ascendant over his Heart, and expel from it, as a cruel Tyrant, the Virtues, which were not yet firmly established in it, but rather very weak and unsettled. On the other Side, Temptations assaulted this young Man from all Quarters; and in such a State he stood in great Need of uncommon Virtue to resist them. Such was the Character, and such the Situation of *Alcibiades*. This we may learn at greater length from *Plato* himself, and from *Plutarch*. The Mixture of good and bad Qualities which were blended together in him, gave occasion to apply to him what *Hommer* says of *Egypt*, a Country famous for abounding at once with Poisons, and with very salutary Plants.

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*where prolific Nile  
With various Simples cloaths the fatt<sup>n</sup>ed Soil;  
With wholesome Herbage mix'd, the direful Bane;  
Of vegetable Venom taints the Plain.*

Odyss. B. 4. l. 320.

*Socrates* tells him, that he drew from the Crown, with which he had presented him, a good Prognostick of the Victory he desired to gain over all who made Court to him, *i. e.* over all those who had no other Design but to corrupt his Understanding and his Heart. This is the first Observation I make upon this Passage, lest any one should misapprehend *Socrates's* Meaning, and understand the Word *ἔρως*, *Lovers*, in the vulgar Acceptation; a Word that occurs in several other Discourses of *Socrates*, as well

well as in this, and which, in its original Signification, has a Reference to that abominable Debauchery which Corruption had introduced into Greece, tho' the *Athenians* had oppos'd its spreading by most severe Laws, as we may see by casting our Eyes upon an Oration of *Æschines* against *Timarchus*. For when *Socrates* in the first *Alcibiades* calls himself *ἄγαπῶν*, Lover, the Word must be understood in a quite different Sense from that in which it is applied to those who encompassed *Alcibiades* in order to debauch him. Irony uses the most common Language, but under vulgar Expressions it wraps up a Sense which hath but a very remote Affinity to their common Acceptation.

*Socrates* began by saying, the good Omen he took from the Crown came very opportunely. *Since we are, says he, as you know, in the midst of a horrible Tempest*; which may be understood two different Ways. The most refined, and consequently the most suitable to the Character *Plato* every where gives *Socrates*, is to take it thus. *Our Thoughts are tossed and bandied to and fro by contrary Reasonings, like a Ship by adverse Winds, and we know not where to fix. Don't you see in what Perplexity we are about Prayer, in which every one is apt to imagine himself very well instructed, and to need no farther Light?* And as this Perplexity and Trouble took its Rise from the Ignorance of *Alcibiades*, *Socrates* repeats the whole Verse, whereas he would otherwise have satisfied himself with saying a Part of it, without adding these Words, *As you know*. For *Socrates* had Reason to say, as he frequently does, that in a Conference the Interrogator says nothing; 'tis he who replies, that says any thing in Effect. After having involved and embarrassed his Adversary, and forc'd him to make  
absurd



absurd Answers, *Socrates's* Way was then to resume briefly all that had passed in the Conversation. And when he was reproached for putting Absurdities in their Mouths, he replied, *I have done nothing, but asked a few Questions; and therefore, if there be any Extravagance, it is his who made me the Answers.* It is upon this, methinks, that our thorough Intelligence of the Verse cited by *Socrates* depends: And I am persuaded, that if we look narrowly into the Matter, this Explication will not appear too subtle and refined.

The other Way of understanding the Application *Plato* makes of this Passage of *Euripides* is more simple, and perhaps both are equally conformable to *Plato's* Intention. It lies in understanding the Word *χάδωνι*, Tempest, in the same Sense *Euripides* uses it, to signify the Agitation and Tumult in which a besieged City was, only applied metaphorically to express the Situation of *Alcibiades*, defended on the one hand by the Virtue of *Socrates*, and powerfully attacked on the other by Temptations from Pleasure.

And now it is easy to conceive what we meant by what we called in the Beginning of this Discourse, the direct, and the more indirect and artful Applications of Passages in Poets by a Prose Writer. It must be acknowledged, that this now under our Consideration, which is of the latter Kind, gives us much more Pleasure than the properest and most elegant Phrase could do, which did not present any Objects to us to please the Imagination and our comparing Faculty. In fact, the Crown of *Alcibiades*, that of *Tiresias*, the Siege of *Thebes*, the Presage *Socrates* draws of Victory over his Competitors, with regard to the Affections of *Alcibiades*, and  
the

the Tranquillity Virtue must establish in the Breast of this Youth, when it shall have appeased the Tempestuousness of his Passions——

All these Ideas are perceived at one View, and they make, I know not how, so beautiful and noble a Picture, that I do not repent having asserted, that one of the principal Excellencies and Beauties of *Plato's* Writings, lies in the dexterous Use he makes of certain Passages of the Poets, in themselves exceeding beautiful, by warping them into a very singular metaphorical Sense.

The Criticks have observed, that the Dialogues of *Plato* have a great Resemblance to Dramatick Pieces, by the Mixture of Recital and Action, of which they consist: And perhaps this is one Thing which hath contributed the most to make them imagine so great an Affinity between the Poetry of *Homer*, and the Works of this great Philosopher. When we consider *the second Alcibiades* in this View, one cannot choose but give the Glory to *Plato*, of having introduced *Alcibiades* with his Crown of Flowers, more dexterously, and to better Purpose upon the Stage, than *Euripides* has done *Tiresias* with his golden Crown. It is quite natural to suppose a Conversation about Prayer to have taken its Rise from one's going to the Temple to offer Gifts and Prayers; and it is for this Reason, that *Alcibiades* appears here crowned: Whereas in the *Phœnicians* of *Euripides*, we do not know what to make of his Crown of Gold on his Head: He is obliged to tell us why he wears it; and perhaps, after all, *Euripides* had no farther Intention, than to make a theatrical Ornament of it, and to render *Tiresias* more respectable,  
by

by having it on his Head. In reality, there was no great Occasion for it ; for the Prefage *Creon* draws therefrom proved false, *Eteocles*, in whose Name he address'd him, not having survived the Siege of *Thebes*, no more than *Polynice*. It is true, the Wishes of *Socrates* for *Alcibiades* had not much better Success ; but this takes nothing from the Beauty of the Dialogue, whereas the Misfortune of *Eteocles* which followed the Augury of *Creon*, seems to take not a little away from the Beauty of the Tragedy ; for in a Tragedy nothing ought to be useless or superfluous ; the Ornaments ought to have a necessary Connexion with the principal Subject, if one would make the Whole capable of attracting and interesting the Spectators.

I am not insensible that these Reflexions may appear too far fetch'd, or push'd too far ; but besides that they will, if duly weigh'd, be found solid, I am not a little pleas'd to take this Occasion of giving some Idea of the Manner in which I have always endeavour'd to penetrate to the Bottom of the best Remains of Antiquity.

I shall add another Example from the same Dialogue, which it will not be necessary to insist so long upon as the former, to which I gave the first Place, tho' it be taken from the very Conclusion of the Dialogue, because it serves to clear the Subject of it, gives more Room to Reflexions, and has afforded me an Opportunity of explaining something which had never, I believe, before been treated of.

A little before the Passage I have quoted, *Plato* applies to his Subject a beautiful one in the Fifth Book of the *Iliad*. For after having convinced *Alcibiades*, that it is very difficult to make Prayers to the Gods, without exposing our



selfes to some Inconveniences, he promises him that a Person who had his Education very sincerely at Heart, shall one Day teach him how he ought to pray: *But first of all, says Socrates, the Cloud which hangs before your Eyes must be dissipated, that you may, like Diomedes, be capable to discern Gods from Men, i. e. Good from Evil. For, in my Opinion, you are not yet capable of that.*

This Person, of whom Socrates speaks, who shall instruct Alcibiades in the most important Matters, but does not yet find his Mind well enough prepared for receiving Philosophical Views, delays some time to give him these Instructions, and would lead him Step by Step to the Knowledge of Good and Evil, that by it he might be qualified, whether in his Actions, in his Discourse, or in his Prayers, to choose the best. — This Person is Socrates himself. Thus, in the first Dialogue, which is likewise intituled *Alcibiades*, Socrates tells him, *That for a long Time he had been of the Number of his Friends, but that he had not hitherto spoken to him; because being in Love only with the Beauty of his Mind, he had not as yet thought him capable of Conversation suitable to that Love, which was the only Discourse however that he intended to entertain him withal. But since others, who had no such honest Designs, had so long entertained him about quite other Things, he was resolved to speak to him, because he now perceived him to begin to be of a fit Disposition to hearken to reasonable Conversation.* And in the second *Alcibiades*, which quickly follows after the other, he satisfies himself with confounding his Ignorance and Vanity, still putting off to another Time, the giving him more profound Instructions. He tells him, *That*  
he

he shall be taught in what Manner he ought to pray to the Gods, when the Clouds which now obscure the Eyes of his Mind shall be dispersed: And it is to express this in a more noble Manner that he uses the Words of Homer, which I shall now set in their true Light.

Diomede being wounded by an Arrow, addresses a Prayer to *Minerva*, and supplicates her to grant him Victory over his Enemy. The Goddess hearkens to his Prayer, and answers him, That she will inspire him with as much Courage as she had formerly given his Father *Tydeus*: But that to put him in a Condition of combating with more Advantage and Security, she had now taken from before his Eyes the Clouds, which overspreading them, had hitherto rendered him incapable of distinguishing whether it was a God or a Man that appeared to him. Let him attack Men in good Time, but let him beware of engaging in combat with the Gods.

Be bold (she cry'd) in ev'ry Combat shine,  
 War be thy Province, thy Protection mine;  
 Rush to the Fight, and ev'ry Foe controul;  
 Wake each paternal Virtue in thy Soul:  
 Strength swells thy boiling Breast, infus'd by me,  
 And all thy God-like Father breathes in thee.  
 Yet more, from mortal Mists I purge thy Eyes,  
 And set to view the warring Deities.  
 These see thou shun thro' all th' embattel'd Plain,  
 Nor rashly strive where human Force is vain.

Iliad, B. 5. l. 157.

The Justness of the Application of this Verse is striking. I shall not stay to explain upon it; let me only observe how fine and truly philosophical it is, since Wisdom is a Divine Gift, and

only leads to truly Divine Things: Whereas Man, that is, the competing Interests which agitate him, and are the Objects of his Wishes and Prayers, those frivolous Interests, with which Poets have filled their Comedies and Satires, and indeed all the Things which appear great to Vulgar Eyes, have nothing in them that is not vile and low, nothing that is not very far removed from the Scope a wise Man ought to have continually before him, and will pursue, when his Eyes are opened, and all the Mists that cover them are driven away.

Here I would stop, were it not to make a Reflexion, which is in some Sort a Digression from the present Subject, upon the Resemblance between this Passage of *Homer*, and one in the 4th Book of *Kings*, c. 6. v. 17.

*And Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his Eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the Eyes of the young Man, and he saw: And behold, the Mountain was full of Horses and Chariots of Fire round about Elisha.*

Thus do the Fables of the Poets imitate sacred Truth. *Virgil*, in the second *Æneid*, hath rendered this Passage of the *Iliad* his own, and made an admirable Use of it, in this charming Speech of *Venus* to *Æneas*.

*Now cast your Eyes, while I dissolve  
The Mists and Films that mortal Eyes involve:  
Purge from your Sight the Dross, and make you see  
The Shape of each avenging Deity.*

B. 2. l. 819.

To conclude; I might have chosen my Examples from any other of his Dialogues, to illustrate the Use *Plato* made of the Poets: But I have



have given the Preference to those I have taken Notice of in *the second Alcibiades*, because from them I can draw a certain Argument, that it is really *Plato's*, and not *Xenophon's*, according to the Opinion of some mentioned by *Athenæus*, which the learned (b) *Muretus* seems to approve (c).

(a) *Muretus* Orat. 4. l. 2.

(b) See the true Character of *Plato's* Writings, in my Lord *Shaftsbury's Advice to an Author*, p. 133, &c. where his Dialogues are shewn to be real *Poems*; and to have been considered as such by ancient Criticks,





ADISCOURSE *upon the* Epick  
FABLE.

By Mr. L'Abbe V A T R Y.

*Read to the Academy of Belles Lettres, April  
24th, 1731.\**

ALL those who have given Rules for the *Epopée*, or commented upon *Aristotle's* Poeticks, have considered the Epick Fable as what is the principal in this Poem, and as it were its Soul, and have treated of it at great length. They almost all agree, that the Fable in an Epick Poem is nothing but the Action in it disposed according to certain Rules. To use the Words of Father *Manbrun*, the Subject of a Poem is the Matter of it, which becomes a Fable by the Form the Poet gives it. According to this learned *Jesuit*, the Epick Fable has all these Perfections, when the Action is one, makes a Whole, and is grand; and above all, when it is not exactly narrated according to the Order of Time: For in this does it chiefly differ from a History in Verse.

This

\* *Memoirs*, Tom. 9. p. 228.

This is likewise the Opinion of *Tasso*, *Castelvetro*, *Victorius*, and many other Criticks.

Father *Bossu*, without minding modern Criticks, and taking his Ideas from the best Works of Antiquity, hath given quite another Description of the Epick Fable. He thinks it essential to this, as well as every other Fable, that it should be an Allegory, under which some Truth is concealed; and in his Judgment an Epick Fable is of the same Nature with *Æsop's* Fables, tho' of a different Species. They differ in this, that the Fables of *Æsop* are dispatch'd in a few Words, and in them are introduced all Sorts of Beings, inanimate as well as animate, whereas in the Epick Fable there are long Harangues, and it only makes Gods and Heroes speak and act: But both are alike in this Respect, that they have the same Scope, which is, to instruct by an Allegory. Father *Bossu* owns, that the Fable is an Action, and that this Action ought to have all the Characters which *Manbrun* attributes to it; but he maintains besides, that some moral Lesson should result from this Action; and this is what *Manbrun*, *Tasso*, and the other Criticks seem not to have known.

Father *Bossu* builds his Sentiment upon the Examples *Homer* and *Virgil* have given us of this Poetry, and the Rules of *Aristotle* and *Horace*. He has explained both with all imaginable Perspicuity and Precision; but he hath carried his Researches no farther. Being persuaded, and with very good Reason, that the happy Success of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssy*, and the *Æneid*, fully justified the Rules observed in them, he, perhaps, thought it unnecessary to enquire into the Foundation of these Rules in Nature, and prove the Necessity of following them in an Epick Poem.



My Design in this Discourse is to supply what Father *Bossu* over-looked. I am not therefore to examine the Fables of *Homer* or *Virgil*: Here I could add nothing to what he has said. I am only to attempt to discover the Reasons which may have determined those great Poets to make their Poems real *Apologues*: And by considering Epick Poetry independently of all Authorities, I shall endeavour to make it appear by pure Reasoning from the Nature of Things, that it ought to be an allegorical Action, which teaches some useful Truth; and I shall add some few Reflexions upon the Characters this Truth ought to have.

The greatest Merit of Poetry in general, and of the Epick in particular, is to insinuate into our Minds important Lessons, under the Appearance of no other View than to amuse us, and by spreading Charms over every thing it touches. It gives Beauties to its Recitals, which Prose can never have, but it is only in respect of instructing by Means of the most engaging Fictions, that it is superior to all other Arts; that it is preferable to Philosophy, or rather is the most masterly Performance of the sublimest Philosophy. If we take away from Poesy the Advantage of instructing, and confine it to mere Amusement, proper for relaxing the Mind after its serious Occupations, we sadly degrade it: It is no longer a Divine Art; it is no more than an idle Sport of Wit; it no more deserves the Attention of the Wise. A reasonable Man will put very little Value upon a Work of Fancy, which has no other Aim than to divert. Those Productions in which there is no Solidity, and that are merely intended to titillate the Imagination, do not long please, but are like some Dishes compound-  
ed

ed to gratify the Palate, which afford a very transient Satisfaction, and are quickly nauseated. Truth and Virtue have Charms, even to the most depraved Readers; and a Poet, if he understands his Art, will not fail to embellish his Compositions with them. The *Epopée* requires this more than any other Work: This noble, majestic Poetry is naturally an Enemy to trifling; and its Recitals have not the Dignity suitable to them, from any other Source, but the excellent Morals wrapt up in them. What would the Story of a Conference between a Wolf and a Lamb be, were it devoid of all Instruction? Nothing, surely, would be more silly and despicable: But if by this Recital, an useful Lesson is convey'd; if it teaches me, for Instance, to be upon my Guard against having to do with those who are more powerful than I, then it is no longer to me Prattle only fit for Infants, but I find it a Discourse full of Wisdom, that deserves my Attention; and I perceive a vast Difference between such an Apologue, and an unmeaning Tale. Now a Poem which hath Instruction by an Allegory for its Scope, will have the same Superiority above a Poem in which nothing higher than mere Amusement is intended. *Achilles* is a Demi-God who hath no equal in Valour, and upon his Destiny depends the Success of a very great Enterprize; and *Agamemnon* commands all the Kings of *Greece*. Now one might easily make a very interesting History in Verse, of the Adventures of these two Heroes; but what renders *Homer's* Work infinitely superior to such a History, is purely, that *Agamemnon* and *Achilles* are in the *Iliad* no other, than the Wolf and the Lamb in *Æsop's* Fable: Their Quarrel is no otherwise worthy of the *Epopée*, than as it instructed all  
Greece

*Greece* in a Maxim of the greatest Consequence to their Conservation.

If it be acknowledged, that Instructiveness raises the Epick Poem above a History in Verse, (and I think it can't be denied) then is Instruction necessary to the Oeconomy of this Poem, for a Poet is indispensibly obliged to give his Work all the Grandeur and Sublimity of which it is susceptible. Were it allowable in him to neglect the ennobling his Poem by rendering it instructive, it could only be so, because this End was not compatible with some other great Ornaments: But a Poem, by being allegorical, does not exclude any Beauties which any other Poem admits. The Descriptions will neither be less natural, agreeable or various: The Characters may be painted out in no less lively Colours, and the Passions may be work'd up in it with no less Force and Grace; and even tho' the Instruction should wholly consist in one single Maxim, resulting from the Whole of it, this would not make it less regular, which is a considerable Advantage.

A Poem to be regular, must be one Whole, composed indeed of many Parts, which have so necessary Connexion, that they are, as it were, Members of one Body. The Reason of this is, that nothing can come up to the Satisfaction of a Reader, when he can take in a whole Poem at one Glance of his Eye, see at once its whole Ordonnance, and easily preserve a compleat Idea of it: But nothing hath this Effect better than a Moral resulting from the whole Work: It fixes the Mind by discovering to it the Poet's Design; it shews the whole Disposition of the Poem in a clear Light; it is the Bond that unites all its different Parts, and binds them closely one to another;



another ; and that in a Manner equally easy to be perceived and retained. In one Word, it is by such a Moral, that the Action is compleat in itself, and stands in need of nothing before or after it.

For Example, *Homer's* Intention by the *Iliad*, was to persuade the *Greeks* to firm and close Union. It is easy to see that upon this Moral depends the whole Ordonnance of the Poem : The Action opens with a Quarrel between *Achilles* and *Agamemnon* : *Achilles* shuts himself up in his Tent, and will not fight. From this Moment the *Greeks* suffer great Calamities. The Death of *Patroclus* makes *Achilles* return again to combat the *Trojans* ; and soon after *Hector* is killed ; that is, *Troy* loses all that could retard its Ruin. Then *Homer's* Scheme is accomplished, his Fable has attain'd to its Perfection : Nothing more is necessary to make the Inconveniency of Discord among the Chiefs felt, nor to shew the happy Consequences of their good Intelligence ; and all has thus the simplest and most obvious Relation to that general End proposed.

It is not so with a simple Recital of any Action whatsoever : It can never be one Whole in any proper Sense. For Instance, if it be the Recital of a Siege, that Siege has an essential Relation to a War, in which it is but one Circumstance, and a War depends upon several Events preceding it, which were the Causes of it. A Poem which recounts this War, or that Siege, is truly but a particular History, which makes a Part of a more general one, and therefore is not a Whole.

In a History in Verse, the Poet must be guided either by the Events as they happened, or by his Fancy disposing them as he pleases ; and thus  
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he marches at Hazard, and often wanders and leads his Readers astray with him; whereas a Poet who directs his Fable to one moral End, always knows where to begin, where to stop, and where to end: He is never embarrassed; his raveling and unraveling is natural.

'Tis Pity that *Tasso* had not known the Necessity of making his Action a real Fable: He might easily have done it, without changing his Subject: His Poem would have been infinitely more regular, more noble and interesting. He composed it not long after the *Turks* had taken *Constantinople*, and made several other Conquests which might have alarmed *Christendom*; there was a Probability that the Princes of *Europe* would unite to oppose so formidable a Power. *Tasso* himself seems to hint something like this in the Beginning of his Poem: But in such a League there was Reason to apprehend the common Bane of all Leagues; which is, that so many Princes of opposite Characters and Interests would not long agree together; and therefore what it was of greatest Moment to persuade them of was, to take all proper Measures for preventing any Feuds among them. The Poet might have suggested one of the surest, by exhorting them to choose a Chief, who should by Consent have the absolute Command over them all during the War. This Truth resulted naturally from his Subject. If he would have disposed it to serve this Purpose, he might have represented the Princes engaged in the Crusade, stopt in their Expedition while they were without a Head, and all yielding to their Army after they had submitted themselves to the supreme Command of *Godefroy Bouillon*.

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He might have, as he has very well done, set out with the Election of his Hero for General, and the six Years, which he says the War lasted, would have furnished him with several Episodes, in which he might have exerted himself to shew the Mischiefs of Anarchy, at the same time that the Conquest of *Jerusalem* would have evidenced the Utility of their re-uniting under one Chief. His Subject is great of itself, and had he disposed it into an Apologue, it would have become more fruitful, and capable of interesting all *Europe*, especially in the Hands of a Poet of so singular Talents as *Tasso*. When one considers the Infinity of Beauties scattered thro' his Work, one cannot help regretting that he had not in this Respect, followed the Example of *Homer* and *Virgil*.

Many able Writers, *Tasso* in particular, have demonstrated, that the Action in an Epick Poem should be one: The same Reasons prove, that the Truth veil'd under the Action, ought likewise to be one: One Body ought to have but one Soul; and as a regular Palace far surpasses a confused Pile of Building, an Epick Poem, formed of one Fable, will please infinitely more than Poems which are a String of Fables, such as the *Metamorphoses* of *Ovid*, or indeed than any other Poem whatsoever, in which one would undertake to instruct a young Prince by Lessons, wrap'd up in the various Adventures of a Hero, as *Cyrus* or *Telemachus*.

He who treats some philosophical Subject, begins with Definitions and Divisions, and strictly adheres to exact Method. However much an Orator may conceal his Art, he nevertheless very nearly follows the same Order as the Philosopher: Without doing so, how could either  
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the one or the other gain his End, which is, to have his Discourse comprehended and retain'd? The Poet cannot take this Method; it would discover his Intention too soon, and his Address consists chiefly in disguising it. He designs to give Lessons, but he would seem to intend merely to divert. Yet he must explain himself with equal Clearness, and his Discourses must have as close a Connection, that they may not be forgot. Now if his whole Subject be but one Fable, the different Instructions scattered through his Poem will have this necessary mutual Connection and Dependence; and such an Apologue will serve in the Room of the Philosopher's Method, and the Orator's Order, because there will be nothing in the Poem, which has not a strict Relation with the Truth it is intended to teach.

Nevertheless, a Poem will not be the less instructive, nor the less susceptible of Variety, by aiming only at one general Truth, if the Poet understands his Art well. That Truth ought not surely to be one of those moral ones, which are of use only upon certain singular Occasions, or which are solely adapted to private Life, such as the greater Part of those Lessons are, which we learn from the Fables of *Æsop*: 'Tis to the commoner Ranks of Men they are addressed; 'tis those they instruct with respect to Behaviour in certain Situations they may happen to find themselves in: Such a Scope is too low for so considerable a Work as an Epick Poem. It would be ridiculous to compose some thousand Verses, and display all the Majesty and Sublimity of Poetry, and employ the Intervention and Ministry of the Gods, merely to shew that a Sycophant lives at the Expence of him who listens to him, or that every one ought to live

live conformably to his Condition and Rank. A short Apologue is sufficient to prove these Maxims : The Importance of the Morality, which is the Foundation of the *Epopée*, must bear Proportion to the Majesty of such a Poem, and by Consequence it must be capable of interesting whole Nations : A less Object is not worthy of so great a Work.

*Res gestæ regumque ducumque, tristia Bella.*

One may see in Father *Bossu*'s excellent Treatise, how *Homer* and *Virgil* have entered into this View : If they have proposed one Object only to their Readers, it was purely to avoid Embarrassment ; and that sole Object, well conceived, has proved more than sufficient, by their Management, to lead their Readers from Marvel to Marvel ; and to instruct them incessantly, as well as charm them uninterruptedly.

It likewise appears proper, that a Poet should give particular Attention to Time and Place, in the Choice of the Instruction he would convey. It ought to have Relation to the principal Events in his Age, and seem to be demanded by the present Conjunction of Things ; and he should be ever making Allusions to them. The Reason is, because the surest Way of interesting Readers, is to entertain them with Matters which have already made a deep Impression upon their Minds. Another Reason is, that the Poet by confining himself to Objects before his Eyes, will be able to give them more Force and Energy, and be much abler to inspire with great Passions, if he be himself moved by them. *Demosthenes* and *Cicero* could not have pleaded with such

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Vehemence, had *Philip* and *Catiline* been imaginary Persons.

The Subject *Chapelain* chose would have been very proper at a Time when any foreign Prince had endeavoured to ravish the Crown of *France* from the lawful Heir; for then *France* re-conquered from the *English* by *Charles* the VIIth, was a very fit Action for an Epick Poem. The Moral of this Poem would have been, that we ought never to depart from our established Laws of Succession to the Crown of *France*. Permit me to pursue a little this Project for an Epick Poem, it will serve as an Example to illustrate what I have hitherto advanced. See then what would have been the Fable of this Poem. One of our Kings falls into a Lunacy: The Queen his Consort engages him in a thousand Intrigues, to set the Husband of his Daughter upon the Throne, to the Prejudice of his own Son. This weak King himself introduced the Foreign Prince into his Dominions, puts him in Possession, and so securely establishes him, that at his Death his Son scarcely could count three Places of Strength which adhered to him: Mean time neither the Nobility nor the rest of the Nation could suffer such a total Overturn of the Laws; they united to oppose it, and Heaven wrought Miracles in their Favour, expell'd the Usurper, and re-established the lawful King.

How fruitful would such a Subject be! The Poet might there describe all the Disorders of his own Time, under the Covert of describing those of another Age; and to render all Foreign Power hateful to his Country, he might have exaggerated the Treachery, the Insolence and Cruelties of the *English*; he needed not confine him-  
self



self rigidly to the Truth of History: In representing all the different Ranks and Orders in the State, he would have found Occasion to give proper Lessons to each of them. The People, oppressed by the *English*, would from thence learn, that the greatest Misfortune that could happen to them, was to fall under any other Domination but that of their own Princes. The *Comte de Dunois*, and the other Nobles, would shew our Nobility what they ought to do in such Conjunctions. The King himself would receive his Lesson: He would see by the Example of *Charles* the VIIth, that in whatever Situation he may be, he should not despair; and that he is under an indispensable Obligation to support the Rights of his Birth, even at the Hazard of his Life. The Episode of the Maid would exhibit Heaven watching, in a particular Manner, over *France*, for the Maintenance of its Constitutions; and would thus furnish enough of the Marvelous, while the History of the beautiful *Agnes* would afford Room sufficient for the most entertaining Recital, and the most charming and touching Pictures. There is nothing honourable to our Nation, or striking in our History, or singular in our Climate and Country, which would not have found a Place in this Poem: None of our illustrious Families would have been over-looked: The Warrior, the Divine, the Magistrate, the Negotiant, the Man of Letters, the Artisan would have had each his Share: The purest Politics, those the most suitable to our Inclinations and Genius, would have been set in their just Light, so much to the greater Advantage, that they might often not have had the Air of Max-

ims, and would rather be Facts which suggest them, than the Reflexions of the Writer. Such a Poem, for which an able Critick would find a yet more vast Plan, one much more diversified, and much better conceived than that I have been giving, executed by a Poet equal to the Task, would put an End to the Doubt, Whether it be possible to make an Epick Poem in *French*. The Author would also thereby render a great Service to his King ; for I much question, whether any Manifesto, drawn with the greatest Eloquence, could have so great an Effect.

That Antiquity employ'd Poetry as one of its Ways of promoting political Ends, not only *Homer* bears Witness, but all the *Greek* Tragedies ; even their Comedies are an indisputable Proof of it. At *Athens* the Poets thought themselves no less proper than the Orators, for inspiring into their Fellow-Citizens the Sentiments they ought to have about political Affairs. *Euripides*, for Instance, composed his *Supplicants*, merely to stir up the Hatred of the People of *Athens* against those of *Argos*.

It may perhaps be said, that Poetry may be employed in a popular State, where every one has Liberty to give his Opinion about Matters of Government : That it is not the same in a Monarchy, as in an Aristocracy, where the Administration is confined to a few Persons : But if a Poet only works by the Orders of his Prince, and conformably to the Commands prescribed to him, what could then be objected ? In a Monarchy, as in every other Government, it is impossible but Works wrote with Spirit and Fire must spread over the  
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the whole Nation, be read, relished, applauded, and make a very strong Impression: So that I dare aver, that it would be of great Use to employ the Power of Poetry to inspire into the People the Sentiments and Passions they ought to have; and that it is the noblest Use a Poet can put his Talents to. *Virgil* proposed no other End to himself by his *Æneid*, but to persuade the *Romans* that they ought to submit to the *Julian* Family; and *Augustus* did not despise that Way of reconciling such Republican Spirits to Monarchy.

We are far, now-a-days, from attributing such great Views to Poetry; we, who look upon it as the Amusement of the Idle. But may I be permitted to say, we are in this not unlike those who imagine Geometry consists in mere Speculation about the Properties of Figures, and who would laugh at any that should assert it to be the Foundation of the most necessary Arts in human Life?

I conclude with a Recapitulation of this Discourse in a few Words. An Epick Poem is not a Fable, because it is filled with fabulous Stories about Gods and Heroes, but because it is a true Apologue of the same Nature, tho' of a different Species with those of *Æsop*, from which results a general Instruction, to which several Allegories conduce, as Parts of one and the same Whole. Our Reasons for thinking so are, that it is only a Fable so constituted that can give the *Epopée* its regular Form; and that it is by Instruction alone, that an Epick Poem can rise to the Grandeur and Majesty which is its essential Character. Moreover, this general Instruction ought to be a Truth, a political Truth,



Truth, accommodated to the Time and Place;  
because it is thus only it can interest, and  
by consequence be useful, which two Qua-  
lities make the Perfection of Works of Genius.





*First* DISSERTATION *upon*  
*an* EPICK Poem ; *in which it is*  
*enquired, whether it be necessary*  
*that the Action of an Epick Poem*  
*should have a Relation to a Moral*  
*Truth.*

By Mr. de la BARRE.

*Read to the Academy of Literature, 22d of May*  
 1731\*.

THO' the first Epick Poems have not been preserved to our Time, yet all the Inventions of human Genius being imperfect at their Birth, we may rest assured, that the first Epick Poems only pleased because there were then no better. They could not be quite devoid of all Beauty, for the very undertaking of an Epick Poem, discovers a Genius above the ordinary Size ; but there must have been many Defaults in them, because the human Mind is apt to go astray, when it has itself alone to guide it. The Beauties were observed, in order to be imitated, and

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† Memoirs of Literature, T. 9. p. 239.

the Imperfections in order to be avoided ; and thus by Degrees a more regular and noble Composition was accomplished. At last appeared *Homer*, i. e. one of the greatest Genius's that ever liv'd. He brought Epick Poetry to a Perfection hitherto unknown to it, and to which few Poets have since him attained. To him wholly and solely belongs the Glory of having found out the Art. But this Art lay, as it were interr'd in the *Iliad* and *Odysssey* for many Ages. 'Twas *Aristotle* who from thence dug it up: Struck with the Sublimity of *Homer*'s Invention, and perhaps excited by the Esteem all Persons of good Taste shewed for his Poems, he applied himself to study the Conduct and Oeconomy of them, with a Success, of which such a profound Genius alone was capable : And the Conduct of them appeared to him so well understood, that whatever *Homer* had executed, either with respect to the Invention, the Ordonnance of his Action, or Extent and Duration, he fixed upon as so many Rules never to be departed from.

We should have very little, perhaps, to do after this admirable Critick, if he had taken care to be as clear as he is just in his Decisions. But his extreme Conciseness, together with the Novelty of the Sense he was obliged to give to many Expressions he uses, render him obscure. And this Difficulty of understanding him, made many Commentators attempt to explain his Sentiments. And, you know, that it is hardly possible for Commentators not to confound their own Ideas with those of the Author they propose to illustrate. In this Manner is it, that we have had from them the *Moral Rule*, i. e. an Obligation on Poets to choose a Moral Truth, and to make the whole Action of a Poem subservient to



to it. They have pretended that *Aristotle* has established this Rule, that *Homer* had marked it out by his Example; and that abstractly from all Authority, Reason itself makes it absolutely necessary. To me, on the contrary, it appears evident, that no such Rule is to be found in *Aristotle*; that *Homer* had not the Views attributed to him; and that there is no Obligation imposing any such Rule upon a Poet. To prove these Points shall be the Subject of this Discourse.

### FIRST PROPOSITION,

*That Aristotle has not established the Moral Rule.*

This Rule is not to be found in *Aristotle*, is my first Proposition: And the Discussion of this Point will be the shorter and less difficult, that, the Action of the *Epopœe* consisting, according to *Aristotle*, in a Fable and Episodes, it will be sufficient to examine what he has said of Fable, which is the principal Part.

The Term, *Fable*, is far from signifying the same, in speaking of Epick or Dramatick Poetry, that it does in common use. We generally understand by that Word a Fiction in the Nature of an Apologue, which is neither true nor probable: Whereas it is essential to the Fable of both these Poems, to be possible and probable. (a) *Fable is the Imitation of an Action*, says *Aristotle*: And that Acceptation of the Word being new, he adds, for the Sake of those who might have been embarrassed by it, *For I give the Name of Fable to the Composition of Things*. This Explication, I think, we cannot better translate, than by saying, that the Fable

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(a) Poet. Cap. 6. συνθεσις τῶν πραγμάτων.

is the Essence of the Poem, and that which knits and unites together the Parts composing it. This Interpretation, which is not very different from that of *M. Dacier*, unfolds the Connexion, which is not otherwise easily discoverable in *Aristotle's* Discourse: For this Philosopher had just said, that there are two constituent Parts of Actions, viz. Manners or Characters, and Sentiments. In fact, we see, that Men think differently, according to their various Turns and Dispositions: And this shews that Sentiments and Characters are essential to the Action of a Poem. But as Art can separate the most inseparable Things to consider them apart, when *Aristotle* comes to point out the different Parts of a Poem, he names the Fable, the Characters, and the Sentiments, as three distinct Things, and as the three constituent Parts of an Action, of which Fable is the chief, it being that in which the two others center. This Philosopher being persuaded that Poetry took its Rise from the Propensity to Imitation, natural to Mankind, had first of all observed, that Epick and Dramatick Poetry imitate Actions; and that this Imitation is what is principal in them. He had also taken Notice, that to succeed in either of these Kinds of Poetry, one ought rather to choose a probable than a true Action. Upon this Principle he gives the Name of Fable to the Imitation, the Qualities of which he was about to describe; and you see, Gentlemen, that it agrees very well to it, since it is not in reality to the Truth of Events, but merely to their Probability; that a Poet ought to have Regard; And you may also see, and it well deserves your Attention, that all which is essential to Fable, and all contained in this Definition, be-  
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ing, according to *Aristotle*, nothing else but a possible and probable Action, it must be a Mistake to attribute the Rule now under our Consideration to him; because Morality would be the Essence of Fable, if the Fable ought to be founded upon some moral Truth, and include it, as is pretended.

It is, in truth, owing to a Mistake of *Aristotle's* Meaning in the Passage I have now explained, that some have imagined this Rule was there. Father *Bossu* (b) not having begun to study *Aristotle's* Poetics, till he was acquainted with *Æsop's* Fables, no sooner found the Name of Fable given to the Action of a Poem, than he fancied that this Action, like Apologues, must have two essential Parts, to wit, Fiction and a moral Truth. With this Prepossession he set himself to search for this Notion in our Author; and it was not very difficult for him to find it in the Way he went to work. He separated what *Aristotle* adds to explain his Definition of Fable, from what went before and follows, and considered it by itself: And thus he came to make our Philosopher say, that Fable is a Mixture of Fiction and Truth. *The Composition of Things* may indeed signify that in our Language, as well as any other Mixture one pleases: But it does not signify it in the Passage we are considering; because the Author is there speaking merely of the Connexion between the Things which necessarily enter into the Action of a Poem, viz. Characters and Sentiments; not to mention that the Term *Mixture*, which is very proper for the Use the Interpreter makes of it, presents a quite different Idea from that belonging to the Word *συνθεσις* used by *Aristotle*.

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(b) *Traité du Poem. Ep. l. 1. cap. 6.*



Could one have imagined, that this Mistake would have had such Consequences? Nothing has done more Honour to Father *Bossu*, than the new Rule, and the Application he hath made of it to the three Poems which Antiquity hath transmitted to us with such high Encomiums. All the Learned since have imagined, that *Homer* compos'd his *Iliad* to teach the *Greeks* the Advantages of Union, and all the rest that we find in his Treatise upon an Epick Poem. It has been again and again repeated in Prose and Verse, and M. *Dacier* himself hath spoken of it as well as others, tho' he hath very well taken up Father *Bossu* for his Mistake.

I do not scruple to say with this Author, that there are both Fiction and Truth in the Fable of an Epick or Dramatick Poem; but I cannot find out those he pretends to have found. The Fable of these Poems may be considered as a Fiction, even where it contains nothing but Truth; because the particular Character of a Poet is not to tell things as they really happened, but to represent them as they might or could have happened necessarily or probably. A Fable is accompanied with Truth, even when it is wholly of the Poet's Invention, if the Incidents of which it is compos'd be possible and probable. This is the Doctrine of *Aristotle*, and the Explication of the Definition he gives of Fable. There is no more in it. He never considers it but as the Imitation of an Action; to this he refers all he says of it, and the Probability he requires to it, is the Foundation of the Distinction he establishes between the Historian and the Poet. The former, *says he*, narrates what happens, the other describes what may happen (c).

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(c) Poet. cap. 9.

*If one should put the History of Herodote into Verse, it would still be a History and not a Poem.* He adds, that Poetry is more philosophical and more moral than History, because the Things it describes are general; and what he calls such, are, *what every Man of a certain Character would necessarily or probably say or do*, which is the End of Poetry, even when it gives Names to its Personages.

The Observations which he makes afterwards upon the Use the Poets Comick or Tragick make of Names, tend to the same Effect. The former having imagined a probable Subject, give their Personages what Names they please: And as for the other, they commonly employ real Names, but very frequently they satisfy themselves with one or two known ones, and invent the rest. We have even seen a Tragedy succeed very well, in which all the Names, as well as the Facts were invented. Hence he concludes, that it is not necessary for Poets to attach themselves to received Fables; and this is the Reason he gives for it. *What is known*, says he, *is commonly only known to a few Persons, and yet fails not equally to divert every one.* How could one read that Passage, and not see that Aristotle was persuaded, that the Scope of a Poem was not to instruct, but to please?

Not that this Philosopher imagined a Poem contained no Instruction. He had undoubtedly a juster Notion of Poetry, since he says of Tragedy in particular, *That by Means of our Pity and Terror, it gains its End of purging in us these Passions, and all the others which have any Resemblance to them, or Dependence on them.* But he knew this wholesome Purgation (if one may so speak) and all the other moral Advantages which may be drawn from Poetry, are the Consequences

sequences of that Art, without being its Scope, And this Reflection naturally leads me to my second Proposition, which is to prove, That *Homer* hath not marked out this *Moral Rule* by his Example ; which I could not do, till I had unravelled the Equivoque or double Meaning of the Term *Instruction*, considered as the Effect, or as the End of the *Epopée*.

## Second PROPOSITION.

*Homer has not exemplified this Rule.*

There is this Difference betwixt an Historian and a Poet, that the latter is quite Master of his Subject ; he may choose one entirely feigned, or embellish one which is true in the main Articles by several Fictions : But it being of the Essence of an Epick Action to be probable, it will be no less instructive than History ; nay, I know not but it may be more so. For if one pays strict Regard to Possibility and Probability in a Composition, it is purely to give Fiction an Air of Truth, which Truth itself has not always. Art hides the Fiction, the Poet gets hold of the Reader's Imagination, and makes him believe whatever he pleases : But whatever we see happen to others, instructs us ; and, provided we but attend to Events, either of ourselves, or through the Instigation of others, we cannot fail to discover in them Maxims for our Conduct, by which we are more deeply affected, than if they were laid before us on Purpose, with all the Formality of Ratiocination.

I am far therefore from thinking, that the Poems of *Homer* contain no Instructions. His  
Fables



Fables have the Characters of Possibility and Probability, which *Aristotle* requires; for he wrote them to Readers who believed all he says of the Gods. They found no Difficulty in believing, for Instance, That *Neptune* persecuted *Ulysses*, and destroyed his Companions. They were persuaded that *Jupiter*, the Sovereign Master of Heaven and Earth, Father of Gods and Men, had loved mortal Women: So little did they doubt of it, that there were among them Men who passed for his Descendants, and to whom that Origin procur'd no small Veneration. They believed with the same Facility, all the other Extravagancies of Paganism: And hence *Aristotle* in observing that a Poet, against whom it should be objected, that he neither told Things as they happened, nor as they might possibly have happened, might defend himself, by pleading the common Belief of what he says, gives for an Example, *What they talk of the Gods, the greater Part of which, says he, is contrary to Truth* (d). I grant then, that *Homer's* Poems are instructive; and if it is desired, I will further grant, that we may see in the *Iliad*, in some Sort, that Truth which hath been so much talked of, viz. *That good Understanding makes Enterprises successful, and that Discord defeats them*. But I maintain, that *Homer* had it not in his View in the Composition of his Poem, because it is not found there in the Manner it ought and would be, had he compos'd the Poem on purpose to establish that Maxim.

To be of that Kind, it ought to present itself directly in the Fable, detached from its Episodes, and no other ought to appear. If I do not clearly see it in the Fable, since a very indifferent Genius can easily invent an apposite Rule for any  
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(d) Poet. cap. 25.

Instruction he may have in his View to inculcate, I can never be persuaded to believe, that the sublimest and justest of Authors proposed it as his Scope : And if I see it, but at the same Time see another which equally agrees to it, or rather more, I will then be assured, not that the Poet thought of the one more than the other, but they have both their Share, if one may so speak; and that purely, because whatever is possible, or happens, in which human Passions have any Part, is instructive, and includes Maxims for our Conduct. What then is the Fable of the *Iliad*? (For it is to this Poem, as to the best known, that I confine myself.) *Aristotle* has taught us by two Examples to distinguish the Fable from the Episodes, and I shall lay both before you, that you may judge whether I do not adhere to his Method.

In the first Example *Aristotle* reports the Subject of the Tragedy of *Iphigenia* thus. *A young Princess is placed on the Altar to be sacrificed; but on a sudden she disappears, and is transported into a Country, where it was customary to sacrifice Strangers to the Goddess its Guardian. There she is made Priestess to that Goddess. Some Years after the Brother of the Princess happens to arrive in the same Place. Why comes he? To obey an Oracle. What was the Purport of this Oracle? That belongs not to the general Fable. What comes he to do? That appertains not to the Subject. He no sooner arrives, than he is confined. He is upon the Point of being made a Victim: But he is immediately known, either in the Manner Euripides contrived, or according to the Probability so well kept up by Polyides in making the Prince say, " 'Tis not then enough that my Sister " was sacrificed, I must be so too." And this is what*

what saves him. *Aristotle* adds, *This Fable being made, Names were given to the Personages, and Episodes to the Action.*

Have ye not, Gentlemen, said to your selves, on hearing this Fable narrated, that ye see no Moral, no Instruction? Surely it contains none: Yet according to the Principles I am now examining, Morality is no less essential to Tragedy, than to the *Epopée*. But ye will not find much more Morality in the second Example, which contains the Fable of the *Odyssée*; for thus has *Aristotle* represented it.

*A Man is far distant from his Country for several Years; Neptune persecutes him, and destroys all his Companions; so that he alone remains. On the other side, all in his Family is in great Disorder; his Wife's Suitors dissipate his Estate, and lay Snares for his Son. In fine, after having gone thro' many Tempests, he arrives at home, makes himself known to some of his Family, deceives others of them, redresses his Affairs, and kills his Enemies.*

Here, says *Aristotle*, is all that belongs to the Fable, the rest is Episode. Now one must be much set upon finding a Moral here, to find one out, as *Father Bossu* has done, viz. *That a young Prince ought to be prudent, in order to be able to give good Orders; and to be vigilant, and to reside in his State, in order to execute them.* But this Author does more; and tho' the different Manners in which *Ulysses's* Companions perish be but Episodes, he makes them enter into the Fable, that he may likewise find there, *That Subjects ought to obey, and suffer themselves to be conducted, whatever Reasons they may have against the Orders they receive.* So that in his Hands this Fable becomes an Abridgment or Summary of Morali-



ty for the Prince and his Subjects. Let us now try to give an Idea of the Fable of the *Iliad*, according to these two Models.

*Among many Princes, who had united to carry on a great Enterprize, there is one, who being justly provoked by an Affront done him by the Chief, retires, and takes a Resolution not to fight for the common Cause. Jupiter willing to revenge this Prince, and to make even him who had been injurious to him regret the Want of him, raises the Courage of the Enemy, who gain such considerable Advantages, that the Confederates are upon the Point of shamefully abandoning their Enterprize. They are forced to implore the Succour of the offended Prince: But he is obstinate and implacable in his Resentment: At last he permits his Friend to go to fight. He is kill'd. To avenge his Death, the discontented Prince reconciled himself to his Chief, goes against the Enemy, gains Victory to his Party, and kills with his own Hand him who had given Death to his Friend.*

This is the Fable of the Poem in Question; for we cannot retrench what is said of *Jupiter*, without altering it entirely, because it is the Part That God takes in the Injury done to the Prince, which produces all the great Events. If some Authors have imagined it episodical, it is because they have not attended to the Sentiments of *Homer*, or of those for whom he composed his Poem with Regard to Religion. Nevertheless, it is easy to see that *Jupiter* is no less essential to the Fable of the *Iliad*, than *Neptune* to that of the *Odyssey*. *Ulysses* is a long Time at a Distance from his Country, because *Neptune* persecutes him: The *Greeks* are worsted, because *Jupiter* is angry with them for the Injustice their Chief had committed: Hither all is equal or alike,

alike ; and the Defect in Part of Possibility, we find in what *Neptune* or *Jupiter* is made to do, is no Reason for placing these Things in the Episodes, since the Episodes ought to be as probable as the Fable.

But I will yield that we may see in this Fable, in some Sort, what they would have to be in it, viz. *That Harmony is necessary to the Success of great Undertakings ; and that Dissension ruins them* : Yet I can't but say, that there are Actions to which this Truth would agree more exactly : For in the Case of an Army, in which there are many valiant Princes, it is morally incredible, that the retiring of one who had so few Troops should have such grand Consequences ; and that of *Achilles* really had them, only because *Jupiter* was resolved to avenge the Affront done him. In fine, let them find this Moral in it ; since they are accustomed to do so, I consent to it, and purely to shew that *Homer* did not propose this Moral, and that it was not for it he composed his Poem, I affirm, that the greater Part of the Fable contains another, which agrees much better with it. In fact, what one perceives immediately, and what *Homer* intended should strike most, is the Anger of *Achilles*, caused by the Injustice of *Agamemnon* : One sees afterwards the Consequences of this Wrath which I have described ; and in them one finds, without any Straining, this Truth, *That the Master of the Gods interests himself in Favour of those who are unjustly treated ; but that Resentment ought to be kept within Bounds, and to yield to the Love of one's Country, if he would not draw some Mischief upon himself, as Achilles, who lost his Friend, by being obstinate in his Anger.*

Here then are two *Morals* at once in one Fable. The first agrees to it but so much the more remotely and equivocally, that the offended Prince is not the Chief who shares the Authority, or the Command of the Troops with him who injures him, and that his Retreat does not occasion any Misunderstanding between the Chief and the other Princes; but all remains in the *Grecian* Camp in the same State. The second agrees much better with it, tho' not perhaps the Whole of the Fable: For it seems to have nothing to do with what follows; the Reconciliation of *Achilles* and *Agamemnon*, I mean *Hector's* Death, which is one of the greatest Events in the Poem. Does it not then follow from all this, that *Homer* did not compose the *Iliad* for the Sake of either of them, and that he had some other View in this Undertaking? But I speak of two Truths, as if one could see no more in the Action of the *Iliad*: But when we have read the Whole, do we not find the Action contains a most beautiful Tablature of Friendship? *Achilles*, a cholerick Person, overpower'd by his Resentment, sees the Miseries of his Nation without being touch'd by them, or rather indeed with a malicious Satisfaction, because he sees them reduced to feel the want of his Arm. He is irritated against the *Greeks*, because he had been affronted by him, to whom they ow'd Obedience and Submission, as he himself likewise did: The Entreaties of the Princes for whom he had the greatest Esteem could not move him: But to his Friend he sheds Tears; his Heart is touched by him: He permits him to go to the Battle, and forgetting himself in some Measure for the Sake of him who engrossed his Affection, he gives him his Car, his Horses, his Arms,



Arms, and all the Instruments of his Prowess. What Transports when he hears of his Death! He detests his Anger, he rushes to combat the most valiant of Mortals next to himself, cloath'd with his own Arms: He now desires to live only to avenge the Death of his dear Friend, and is confident of the Death that is to follow his Vengeance. He hastens to declare his Sentiments in an Assembly of the *Greeks*, without reflecting any longer on the Reparation of the Injury for which he had shewn such Insensibility to their Interests. *Hector* falls by his Hand, and the Image of *Patroclus*, ever present to his Mind, provokes him to such a Degree against this Hero, that he insults his Corpse. In fine, he gives Immortality to his Friend, to the utmost of his Power, by making Games to be celebrated in his Honour.

Suspend, Gentlemen, I entreat you, your Reflections for a little, upon this Moral, as well as the other I am going to lay before you. If I would find the Duties of a Prince in the same Action of the *Iliad*, I would not have great Difficulty to discover in it almost the same *Horace* saw;

*Quidquid delirant Reges, plectuntur Achivi.*

*Kings are so much the more obliged to take Reason for their Guide, and to master their Passions, as the Consequences of their Faults are direful to vast Numbers of Persons. It is the Injustice of Agamemnon which brought the Greeks into imminent Danger; and they are victorious when this Injustice is repaired.*

But if *Homer* had intended to compose a Poem to give a perfect Representation of Sovereign

reign Power; and of the Right belonging to it, of being responsible to God alone, and the Consequences of this Privilege; of the Duties incumbent on those invested with it; and of the Respect and Obedience due to them from their Subjects; would he not have accomplished this Design by the Action of the *Iliad*? The Injustice of *Agamemnon* is indispensibly the Action of a Prince, who but too strongly feels that all was permitted to him. Heaven punishes him, but his Subjects continue to acquit themselves towards him as they had formerly done. They know he is culpable; they are persuaded his Fault is the Cause of their Misery; it had bereaved them of him whom they looked upon as their chief Support, and with whom they had been accustomed to conquer; yet, what Respect do they still maintain for him? What Submission do they continue to pay to his Orders? 'Tis thus *Homer* makes them speak: A Multitude of Commanders would be an Evil: We have but one, under whose Sovereignty we ought to conquer or die. He preserves his Dignity in their Councils, and all who enter into them, treat him with the high Regard due to him. But what strikes most, is, that the only one who withdraws his Obedience from him he had promised, however just his Resentment may have been, is punished by the greatest Loss he could suffer, I mean, the Death of a faithful Friend. His Conduct is odious, from the Moment he forsakes his Duty: But when this Misfortune makes him to return to Order, he becomes again what he had formerly been, the Stay and Honour of his Nation. In fine, *Agamemnon* appears to forget his Rank, when he takes a Share in the Games celebrated in Honour  
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of *Patroclus* : But *Achilles* re-minds him of it, and renders him the Honour due to his Rank, by adjudging a Prize to him, for which he did not suffer him to combat.

It would perhaps be not dealing artfully enough with Prejudices, to affirm that every one of these Pictures is as perfect, and as conformable to the Plan of the *Iliad*, as that of the Consequences redounding from Misunderstanding and Discord. However, what hath been observed concerning it, authorizes me to assert, that they are all, if not more agreeable to the Plan, yet more perfect in themselves. I do not know besides, if one may not find in the different Events of which *Homer* has formed his Action, and in the Reflections he puts in the Mouths of his Actors, very plausible Reasons to shew, that he proposed to establish the Doctrine of an universal Fate, reaching not only to what we call Accidents, but to the Actions of Men, which, according to its Pre-determination, are wise or foolish. But I know very well, that supposing he had not this Intention, and that he had a Notion of human Freedom, one may find in the Conduct of *Achilles*, in all that is narrated of him while he continued unactive, and by consequence throughout the whole Poem of which he is the Hero, that extraordinary Men by their Virtues, are likewise so by their Faults; which comprehends an excellent Advice to those who are raised high above others by their good Qualities. And besides, I see that we may perceive from it with equal Facility, that the Safety of a whole Nation often depends upon one single Person, to whom Fortune has, as it were, attach'd herself; which should oblige Princes to take care to manage all those well, who have



rendered Services to the State, because they may happen to be necessary to it.

In fine, the Action of the *Iliad* includes in it a Multitude of Morals, which present themselves to our Understanding, and make different Impressions upon Readers, according to their several Tempers, Characters, and Dispositions, or upon the same Reader, according to the different Humours he may be in when he reads it, which another, prepossessed by opposite Passions, will but very faintly perceive; the Design of the *Epopœe* not being to move the Mind violently, as Tragedy does, but to keep it in a continual Admiration by a Succession of surprising, tho' probable Events, which raise it above itself, if I may be allowed to use that Expression.

It can't be opposed to what I have said, in order to give a Kind of Superiority to the Moral so much insisted upon by some, *viz.* Discord, that the Friendship I have mentioned, for instance, does not commence with the Action. It is true, it comes late; but it is as true, that when *Homer* hath once given us a Sketch of this noble Picture, he never leaves it till he has quite finished and perfected it: All the other Morals are eclipsed by it: The Poet occupies us entirely with this Friendship of *Achilles* towards *Patroclus*; and it is the last Impression he leaves on our Minds. It would be an equal Mistake to object against the other Morals, that they end before the Action; for all that could be concluded from hence is, that they would render the Poem more defective, if the Rule I am examining ought to be observed in it: But in this Case the same Poem would be yet more faulty, if there were *ruths* that employ'd a great Part of

of the Action mixed with another which the Poet chiefly had in view to establish: For these Truths, tho' less general, would strike the Reader with Force sufficient to make him lose Sight of that which it was mainly intended to inculcate upon him.

When one has penetrated into the Mysteries of the Art, and does not stifle the Sentiments awakened in him by this Poem, if he will speak out sincerely what he feels, he will own that he is no less sensible to any one of those Truths which are diffused through it, than to any other of them: But for the Bulk of Men who are ignorant of the Art, and from whom the Poet ought to hide it, 'tis not the more or less Extent that is given to different Truths, 'tis the Manner in which they strike, together with the Disposition of the Reader, which is the Cause why some of them are more easily perceived, and make a deeper Impression than the rest.

It hath then been proved, that *Aristotle* did not make this *Rule of one Moral*, and that *Homer* has not put it in practise; it remains to shew, *That there is no Reason obliging a Poet to subject himself to it.* This last Point will not be difficult.

### Third PROPOSITION.

*Nothing obliges a Poet to subject himself to this Rule.*

If we examine the Nature of the *Epopée*, we shall find nothing in it but a harmonious Recital of Events, great but probable, which by their Connexion make one Whole.

But neither the Idea of Harmony, nor those of Greatness and Probability have any farther Relation to a Moral Truth, than as a Train of Events, as I have observed, in the Order according to which human Passions operate, may and often does occasion our making useful Reflexions upon our Conduct, in the same Manner as Facts narrated in History do.

One Mistake leads commonly into another, From the Comparison that is made between an Apologue and the *Epopée*, and the Necessity of a Moral in the latter, even the former hath been inferred: And it hath not been attended to, that in this the Moral is but a human Invention, not indeed opposite to Nature, but which Nature however does not exact; since the Idea of a Recital, whether considered by itself, or whether we add to it the Ideas of True, of Fabulous, or of Probable, doth not involve in it that of a Moral.

A Moral is become essential to an Apologue, only because the Fables of *Æsop*, *Phædrus*, and *Fontaine* always contain some Moral, which serves for a Foundation to the Fiction: But let them shew us the same in the Poems of *Homer*, *Virgil*, *Tasso*, or of any other of that Rank; and then we will agree, that a Poet ought to conform to these great Models.

But how can they shew us a Thing so incompatible with the Action of a Poem? For I will not deny that a Poet, proposing to make a certain Impression upon the Minds of his Readers, cannot succeed by the Recital in his Poem, unless among the many Truths those Recitals may bring across them, there be one which strikes them more strongly than all the rest, as he intended. But this is not the Point in Question, when it is maintained that Morality is essential

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to the Action, and ought to be its Basis. For then the Moral must be one, as the Action is one. But to find a true Unity in the Action, it is necessary that the Episodes should be drawn out of the Plan and Essence of the Action itself; and not only that there be a Connexion between them, but that the one follow the other necessarily or probably; and that they be each in particular but imperfect Parts of the Action, which alone is a Whole and Perfect. 'Tis thus *Homer* and *Virgil* have preserved the Unity of Action; and the particular Truths, one finds in a Poem, ought to have Qualities, without which the Moral could have no Unity. But is it not visible, that there can be nothing like this in a Moral resulting from a Recital, in which there are many Incidents? None is ignorant, that by adding one or two ever so slight Circumstances to one Fact, it is entirely changed with respect to the Moral. How many different independent Maxims, which have no Connexion one with another, must then result from a long Train of Events, in which one sees all the Passions in the human Breast by Turns, in which each Personage has a different Character, a different Disposition and Sentiments, and every one's Conduct is different?

Let us suppose, to give an Example of it, that the Morality of Discord is as precisely marked in the Action of the *Iliad*, as it appears equivocal to me, and then let us say what *Patroclus* does in this Poem. He is tenderly touch'd by the Miseries of his Country; and by this Means he interests me the more in his Favour, that his Sentiments and Conduct more strongly revive in my Mind the Maxim of Love to one's Country, which one ought to prefer to all the other Considerations of Friendship. When he  
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has thus attached me to him, then whatever concerns him is no longer indifferent to me. I am present with him in the Combat, and see him strike Terror into the *Trojans*, by the Arms of *Achilles*, with a Pleasure that makes me admire the Effects of that noble Sentiment : But when I behold him puffed up by his first Success to such a Degree, as to forget that he is but the Shadow of *Achilles*, and only wears his Armour, who could not with that impart to him neither his Strength, his Courage, his Address, nor his good Fortune; and daring to engage with *Hector*, and falling by his Hands, then touched by his Misfortune, and at the same Time instructed by his Example, I find myself most sensibly moved by the fatal Effects of Presumption : But these moral Reflexions which present themselves to me, are they connected together as the Facts which excite them in my Mind ? Does the one follow the other necessarily or probably ? Are they, in fine, no more but unfinished Parts of this Truth, *That Discord ruins the greatest Enterprizes* ? If there be no such Thing, let the Partisans of a *Moral* lop off this Incident from the Poem : Or rather let them acknowledge, that they will find in any other Incident they could substitute in its Room, Things equally contrary to their System, because the Probability required in the *Epopée* demands, to produce a Change in *Achilles's* Disposition, an Event great in itself and its Circumstances, which is capable of interesting all Persons, and making different Impressions upon them, otherwise their Admiration could not be supported.

## CONCLUSION;

I only intended to combat the Opinion about a *moral Rule*, as it must be understood when one supposes one Moral to be the Foundation of the Action in a Poem: And I am apt to think I have proved more; even that it ought not to be required of Poets to establish one certain Truth in a Manner that would render it superior to all the other Truths, to which the Incidents in their Poems may turn the Reflexion of their Readers: For *Homer* not having imposed this Law on himself, by what Right can it be imposed upon those who choose him for their Model?

I should moreover be apprehensive, that Attention to mark a principal Truth strongly, might spread a Coldness throughout all the rest of the Work, and produce a shocking Mixture of illuminated Strokes with feeble and languid ones, or at least a tiresome *Monotony*: And yet this is not perhaps what is most to be feared, but the Want of Art; which can only take Place in Proportion as the Poet hides his Views, and so orders Matters that his Reader may be penetrated and intimately convinced of a Truth, without perceiving it was the Poet's Design to imprint it upon his Mind. However that may be, one ought to have either of these Rules so much the less in his View in reading a Poem, that they will neither contribute to render it more useful, nor to embellish it more. For in general it is indifferent to its Utility, whether the Poet proposed to instruct his Readers, or he had some other Design, provided he in fact instructs them; and we see he never fails to do it.



it. But if we search to the Bottom of the Matter, and attentively consider the Nature of the human Mind, or the particular Character of the *Epopœe*, we shall find, if I am not mistaken, that a Poet will be so much the more useful, the less he has thought of establishing any particular Truth; because *his Mind being thus less fettered and constrained, will bring forth, to use the Phrase of one of our Poets, so many more Miracles, and he will give more Spirit and Life and Action to his Pictures.*



The



*The Second DISSERTATION upon an  
Epick Poem, serving to illustrate  
the former.*

By Mr. dela BARRE.

*Read to the Academy of Belles Lettres, Sept.  
4th, 1731.\**

**I**T is to satisfy your Desire, Gentlemen, that I undertake a second Time to consider, whether it be necessary that the Action of an Epick Poem should have a Relation to some one Moral Truth. There is nothing embarrassing in the Question itself, but it depends upon some others, which have not been yet handled as they ought to be, and this may have occasioned some Obscurity in my first Dissertation upon this Subject. I flatter myself this Second will leave none. I shall review my Observations, in order to shew the Connexion of some with the rest, which hath not been fully perceived, to separate some from them which may have been confounded with them, and to add others that may contribute to make the Nature and the Properties of the *Epopée* better understood. This shall be the Order

\* *Memoirs*, Tom. 9. p. 257.

Order of my Discourse, the same that I followed in the former, and the Matter will be much the same, but set in a fuller Light. There will however be no inconsiderable Number of new Reflexions.

*First PART.*

I propos'd first of all to prove, that *Aristotle* never dream'd of the *Moral Rule*; and, to shew this I first of all set before you this Philosopher's Definition of Fable: Then I proved that *Father Bossu*, the first Inventor of this Rule, was led into that Opinion by his mistaking the Meaning of two Terms in the Definition: And last of all, to cut off all Difficulties arising from some Reflexions of *Aristotle*, to which one may almost give any Sense one pleases, if they are considered apart from one another, I re-united them, because, when thus joined together, they are not susceptible of any Sense compatible with the Opinion I am combating. Let us treat again of these Things in Order.

1. Whatever Difference there is between *Epick* and *Dramatick Poetry*, they have this in common, that the Action of both consists in Fable and Episodes, with Characters and Sentiments. The Subject of the Poem, the Basis of the Narration, that which the Poet first invents, is what is called the Fable; it consists but of a few Facts centering in one principal Event, in which one Person bears the chief Part. The Episodes joined with it are Circumstances, which serve to embellish and give Grandeur to the Subject. But the Fable and the Episodes, consisting of a Train of Actions, resemble an inanimate Body, to which one gives Life by adding to it

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Sentiments and Characters, as the Causes of those Actions; and by these Degrees the Subject receives the Perfection suitable to it.

This is undoubtedly the Doctrine of *Aristotle* (d); for he says expressly in one Place, *that the Poet ought to form the Plan of his Fable, before he episodes and amplifies it by proper Circumstances*: And in (e) another Place he positively affirms, *that the Poem does not act to imitate Characters; but that they are added for the Sake of the Action*. From which he infers with good Reason, *that the Fable is what is principal in the Poem*. But we may draw another Consequence which follows with equal Necessity from it, viz. *That a Moral cannot be essential to the Epopée, without being necessary to the Fable; because, if the Epopée could not be without a Moral, the Poet would not invent the Fable, but to establish a Moral Truth he had in View*.

It is not difficult to shew, that *Aristotle* did not think Morality essential to the Fable, seeing he had nothing in his Thoughts besides the *Imitation of an Action*. Here, Gentlemen, is a very regular Definition, in which the Philosopher designed to mark precisely what constitutes the Essence of Fable: It ought only to be added, that this Imitation is made by Discourse; and this he thought, with Reason, would be understood of itself, without being mentioned, especially since he had from the Beginning of his *Poeticks* prevented his Reader with Regard to that Point. Imitation is the *Genus*; for whatever exists in Nature, or is possible, may be imitated by Words; and the Action, which is the only Thing the Fable imitates, is the *Difference*: But the Imitation

(d) Poet. ch. 9.

(e) Chap. 6.

tation of any Action whatsoever, to be perfect, has no more Need of Instruction for its Object, when it is made by Words, than when it is done by the Pencil and Colours, or by the Chizel; and by consequence this Object is not essential to it. The Question is decided by this Reflexion, I think; and if it be necessary to add any Thing to it, it is merely to observe, that the Philosopher is so far from imposing an Obligation upon a Poet to confine himself to a certain Instruction in the Composition of his Fable, that in two Plans of Fables which he hath left for Models to future Poets, he has not said one Word that can lead them to think of a Moral.

2. However, Father *Bossu* preserving in this, a Part of the Reputation he had acquired in the preceding Age by his Treatise on the Epick Poem, I apprehended, that the Truth of the Matter would not appear solidly established, till I destroyed the Foundation of the Opinion he had introduc'd. And this being nothing else but a Misapprehension of *Aristotle's* Meaning in these Words, *For I call the Fable the Composition of Things*; I have therefore develop'd his Sense, and made appear, that the *Father* had not misunderstood him to mean a Mixture of historical Fiction with Morality, if he had not considered these Words out of their Place, and without their Respect to what goes before and follows; yea, without attending to their proper Signification.

Of the two Ways of explaining Things, the most learned and the most worthy of a Philosopher, is to point out their Essence: And this is what *Aristotle* first does in speaking of Fable. But when one treats of Arts, something more is requisite; one must, as it were, lay his Finger upon

upon the Thing he is talking of. And this *Aristotle* thought so necessary, that for this Reason he added to his Definition of Fable; *That what is so called is a Composition of Things.*

The Things of which the Philosopher says Fable is a Composition, *i. e.* which it unites, are the Actions, the Characters and the Sentiments: The Actions as the principal, without which there could be no Narrative; the Characters, to distinguish the Qualities of the Actors; and the Sentiments, to unfold their Thoughts. He had said, that the Characters and Sentiments are the Causes of Actions: First, because the Poet makes Persons act conformably to the Characters he assigns to them, whether praise-worthy, as that of *Ulysses*, or in itself vicious, as that of *Achilles*. In the second Place, because this Character determines them to a certain Manner of thinking, in the Circumstances in which the Poet places them. And thirdly, because their Actions are the Consequences of their Sentiments; and the Resolutions these produce. He afterwards distinguishes the Fable, the Sentiments, and the Characters, as three different Things, because the Fable, which unites them hath not at first all the three. It is enough if the Poet at first invents an Action quite naked, if we may so speak: He would have too much to do, if he were obliged immediately to imagine it with all the Circumstances requisite to render it great and interesting. He lays out the Plan of his Fable, he adds Circumstances to it, he adjusts the Conduct of his Actors to certain Characters, he makes them discourse suitably to their Characters, and to the Actions which result from them, as Effects from their Causes; all this he does successively. And as each of these Things must be



regulated by some certain Rules which agree to it, without being applicable to the others, the Art cannot dispense with considering them separately, as so many different Parts of an Action, in which they all meet and are united. This Passage of the *Poeticks* is very clear, tho' *Aristotle* has not perhaps expressed himself with such Precision as if he had wrote in our Language; which made me say, that in order to take him to have meant by the *Composition of Things* a Mixture of Fiction with Truth, Father *Bossu* must have given no Attention to the Context.

And what, after all, can these Words mean, *the Composition of Things*, by which *Bossu* understands a blending of Fiction with Truth? It is a Definition of Fable, if we may believe him. But is the same Thing susceptible of two different Definitions, and can it have two Essences? *Aristotle* had just said, *That the Nature of Fable consists in the Imitation of an Action*; and therefore the *Father* ought to have perceived, that a Fable must be perfect, and want nothing, when an Action is perfectly imitated: He ought then to have seen, that there is no need of its having a Truth for its Object; since an Action may be imitated, without having such an Object in View, as well as having it. I am afraid of staying too long upon a Thing so clear: But I can't help saying, that if one cannot see what led *Father Bossu* to think the *ourban* *Aristotle* uses, that is commonly rendered *Composition*, signified a Mixture; far less can one conceive, how he came to imagine the Things of which Fable is a Composition were Fiction and a Moral Truth, *Aristotle* not having said one Word about a Moral Truth in his *Poeticks*, where he has however  
treated

treated of Fable in all its Parts, to such an Extent, as to leave nothing more to be desired by those who understand him well.

3. Here is the third Thing of which I ought to discourse at greater Length than I did in the preceding Discourse. I shall not prevent you, by remarking how improbable it is, that *Aristotle* would have any where insinuated a Rule which the Definition of Fable itself absolutely excludes. Whatever Idea one has of him, it is agreed on all Hands that he keeps close to his Principles, that he never swerves from them, and that he draws all possible Consequences from them with very uncommon Ability: This is the Character he bears even with those who are no great Friends to his Doctrine. I will however, for a Moment suppose, that like other Writers, he might have forgot what he had said, and loaded his *Poeticks* with opposite Maxims, and examine the Passages quoted by Father *Bossa* upon this Supposition.

First of all then, *Aristotle* having said, That Poetry is more philosophical and moral than History; one might imagine, if this was considered separately, or by itself, that the Advantage he gives to Poetry consisted in its proposing an Instruction which History does not: But it is easy to perceive this is not the Case, *Aristotle* himself having explained his own Meaning. Poetry, says he, is more philosophical and moral than History, because Poetry represents general Things, and History particular ones. And to make his Meaning clearer he adds, A Particular is, for Example, a Thing done by Alcibiades; a General Thing is what a Person of a certain Character would necessarily or probably do. Thus you see it is as if he had said, That Poetry represents Characters more

perfectly than History. Every Man has his particular Character, that is to say, he is born with a particular predomining Inclination : But there is no Person whose Conduct is always ruled by this Inclination : The Prejudices of Education, Regard to the Opinions and Judgments of other Men, the Laws and Customs of the Countries we live in, the Impressions certain Maxims make upon our Imaginations, our Passions, our real or imaginary Wants, every Thing that invirons us, often contributes to make us very different from ourselves. But History restricts itself to a faithful Detail of Actions, and sometimes of the particular Motives of Conduct in certain Conjunctions, without penetrating farther, insomuch that we do not perhaps see one Character in it that is uniform ; whereas Poetry makes Men act always conformably to their Characters ; a Law which we may observe in passing, obliges them not to make them act but for a short Space of Time, during which the Characters may be with Probability kept up. Now, after this I can find no Difficulty in this Passage, *Aristotle* having well explained what he means by General Things which Poetry represents. It is what a violent, passionate, but at the same time magnanimous Man, is likely to do when he is provoked. This is a General Thing. This Picture may be instructive ; nay, I own it always is, if it be well drawn, and I shall add, if you will, that supposing a Person to be ignorant that it is a Fiction, it will make a much stronger Impression upon him than the greater Part of historical Portraits, because it is more exact and more finished. But if we consider, that there is no Poem, which does not contain many Pictures with the same Qualities,



ties, one will be far from imagining that *Aristotle*, when he ascribes to Poetry the Property of describing General Things, meant to insinuate that the Poem ought to have a particular Instruction for its Object, since each of those Portraits includes in it different Lessons: And how should Poetry have such an Object for its Scope; or how should it be entirely employ'd in establishing such or such a Truth? Poetry, which hath so little Regard to Instructions, tho' inseparable from its Portraits, that it has no other Design, but to please by its Composition.

Upon this Occasion, Gentlemen, I may say with one of our most illustrious Predecessors in this Academy (*f*), *That Poetry, the Daughter of Pleasure, as well as Painting, like her hath only Pleasure for her Object; and that this Object is not unworthy of her, because the Desire of Pleasure is no less strong and efficacious in our Breasts than what is called Want or Desire in a less noble but more precise Acceptation of the Word.* But in a Discourse solely destin'd to develop *Aristotle's* Doctrine, I ought to confine myself to what he says; or at least, to what may be inferred from the Principles he establishes by necessary Consequence: Nor ought I even to take hold of every Passage in his *Poeticks* indifferently, if I would preserve Order in my Discourse. We are here treating of Characters, or, which comes to the same, of Portraits; to this Point ought my Observations to be directed. And I maintain, that in composing them, Poetry has no other View but to please; and you will agree, That this is *Aristotle's* Sentiment, if you will but attend

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(*f*) Mr. *Fraquier's* History of the Academy of Inscriptions, T. 1. p. 76.

to what I have already quoted from him, *viz.* *That the End of Poetry is to imitate Actions, but that it adds Characters because of Actions.* If these Words have any Meaning, Poetry must principally have Actions in its View, and Characters and Sentiments only enter into a Poem in a secondary View. And thus the Philosopher positively concludes: For he adds, *So that the Actions, and the Fable comprehending them, are the End of Poetry, i. e.* The nearer or more immediate End. But the remote End of a Recital of Actions, is no other than the Pleasure of hearing a Tale, to which Mankind have ever been very sensible. It is then the End of Characters likewise, which are added purely for the Sake of Actions: For the Accessory can have no other End besides that of the Principal; that is to say, that in general, Tales are told to please; but that because a simple Recital of Actions would be languid and tedious, when it is of any length, however well imagined, it is therefore necessary, in order to enliven it, and keep up Attention to it, to give the Actors in it Qualities which attract and fix the Attention, when they are well represented; and to make them to speak, that they may discover Joy, Hope, Fear, Grief, and all the other Sentiments suitable to the Actions attributed to them, and to the Circumstances in which they are plac'd.

And is it not the same Design of pleasing, that alone has invented the different Species of Poetry? Tragedy pleases us by bestirring our Passions; an Epick Poem by elevating our Mind, and holding it in continual Admiration; Elegy by inspiring into us by a lively Representation of the Miseries of others, a Sorrow that renders us less sensible of our own; Comedy, by indulging our  
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Propensity to laugh at what is ridiculous in our Manners: The Ode, in fine, by making the Impressions upon us in a sudden and unexpected Manner, which in larger Poems require longer Preparation. 'Tis not every where the same Pleasure; but we are as much beholden to the Poet who moves our melancholy Passions, as to one who inspires us with Joy; and above all we like to have our Admiration rais'd, to be astonish'd, and thus as it were transported out of our selves.

Now if there remain any Doubt, it is on account of the Order *Aristotle* prescribes for planning the Subject of the Poem. For he would have the Poet to invent the Fable in general, and then to give Names to his Actors: And *Father Bossu* is persuaded, that the Obligations to compose the Fable of the Poem in this Fashion, could only come from the Resemblance in respect of a Moral, that there ought to be between this Fable and an *Apologue*, with which he is ever comparing it. But need we dig very deep to discover the Foundation of the Method the Philosopher proposes to Poets? He proposes it to them first of all, because he well knew the Limits of the human Mind; and secondly because having attended to the Subjects they commonly chose, he had observed the greater Poets had always prefer'd historical Subjects to invented ones; that this Choice had pleas'd, and that there was little Hopes of pleasing by another Choice; and yet such Events were not commonly very proper, neither for the *Epopée*, nor for Tragedy. I am speaking of historical Events in general, without distinguishing between fabulous History, and that which is more properly call'd History, because one may have Resource indifferently to



the one or the other, and neither of them furnishes Events so proper to Poetry as not to stand in Need of considerable Changes. If the Poet having fixed immediately upon a certain Piece of History, does not lose Sight of it for some Time, in order to add to his Subject from his own Invention, 'tis certain he will find himself stopt in his Carreer very frequently by Circumstances which will be irreconcilable with the Regularity of his Poem, and for ever distressing him. Thus he will go as it were groping in the dark; and 'tis a thousand to one, if at the End of his Labour he do not meet with a last Difficulty that will oblige him to throw aside all that cost him so dear. How much more advantageous is it then to have nothing at first in one's Mind, but the general Subject? There is scarcely a more bewitching Pleasure than that of inventing, and by this Means the Poet has it all: He feels himself animated to perfectionate his own Creation: The Events in true or fabulous History, which are of use to him, present themselves as it were of their own Accord to his Fancy; he considers them as his own Goods, which he may dispose of as he judges proper; he adds what he thinks necessary, and lays aside what is not convenient for his Purposes. Happy Consequences of a Liberty of which *Aristotle* well knew the Value! One needs not after this ask what is meant by a Fable standing out by itself, which has no Relation to any particular Hero, which retraces no known Fact, and contains nothing of the Marvellous in it. By this some would have us to understand, that the Fable, saying almost nothing in that Case, it cannot be the principal in the Poem, as *Aristotle* assures us it

it is, unless it have a Moral Truth for its Basis, But *Aristotle* himself hinders us from conceiving such an Opinion, when he declares, *that what makes the Fable the principal Part is, that the Actions must be invented to give Qualities to the Persons who are to be introduced.* I have twice already quoted these Words. It is not as the nobler Part that the Fable is principal, it is as being necessary to the other Parts, which cannot exist without it. By itself it appears very trifling; but what does it become when it is applied to some celebrated Hero, and when all the Circumstances are joined which can naturally be blended with it? when the Characters of all those who are to have any Share in the Action are duly animated, and their Passions, Affections and Thoughts are expressed in the Conferences they hold? It then becomes one of the noblest Productions of human Genius; and every transported Mind will not surely desire any particular Instruction.

Here I would put a Close to this first Discourse, if you had not seemed to desire a farther Explanation of two Observations I happened to let fall in passing, and which may appear Paradoxes to Persons less enlightened than you. For in composing the Fable of an Epick or Dramatick Poem with *Apologue*, in my first Dissertation I said, the latter was neither possible nor probable; and in the same Dissertation, speaking of Characters, I supposed a certain Kind of *Goodness* necessary to them, which is not generally thought requisite; for if one represents a cholerick, passionate Person, I said, he ought to be at the same Time described or painted out as magnanimous.

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As for what regards the Apologue, a few Words will suffice. I understand by this Word, that sort of Fables in which Animals, Plants, &c. speak and act; and to distinguish them from others, in which Men are the Speakers and Actors, we ought to give them different Names. Now the latter are called Tales. It is then of the first Kind solely that I affirmed, they were neither possible nor probable; and this stands in no need of being proved: But if any will have the Title of Apologue to agree in common to whatever we in ordinary Discourse call Fable, it would still be just enough to say, that Apologue in general, or considered in its full Extent, has neither Possibility, nor what we properly denominate Probability; since these Qualities are wanting to one Species of it. I am not ignorant that a Kind of Probability is required even in them. Thus one ought not to suppose the Oak less than the Hyssop, nor the Acorn bigger than the Pumkin; and we would with good Reason laugh at a Fable-Writer who should make a Coward of the Lion, or ascribe Tameness to the Wolf, Stupidity to the Fox, or Courage and Ferocity to a Lamb. But it is not sufficient that Fables are not shocking in certain Respects to give them the Character of Probable: They are not such, since Virtues and Vices are ascribed to Animals and Plants, which have not the least external Umbrage of them. If no more were done than giving Speech to Creatures which have not that Faculty, it would be sufficient to exclude them from that Denomination: But Writers not satisfied with making them discourse about Things supposed to happen among them, often represent them acting in Consequence of Discourses they had held with one another; and which



which is remarkable, so little is the Probability adhered to that I have mentioned, so unrigidly is the Observance of it exacted, that it is over-leaped to a certain Degree without shocking: As in the Fable where the Lion is represented making a Society for hunting, with three Animals which are very unwilling to keep Company with him, and which are neither carnivorous nor Hunters.

*Vacca, & Capella, & patiens Ovis injuria, &c.*

Infomuch that we may say, that no more is properly demanded here, but another Sort of Probability, which in the Fable of the Lion and the Lamb, for Example, consists in making them say what those whom they represent would say. For it is certain this ought never to be wanting; but it is equally true, that it does not belong to Fable, considered by itself, or in its own Nature; it is its Connexion with a true or possible Thing that gives Fable this Sort of Probability; which one cannot give any other Account of, than by saying, that it is probable as an Image, without being so in itself. This is what I have to say with Relation to *Apologue*. The second Illustration must be longer, because I cannot make it without explaining a Passage in *Aristotle's Poeticks*, which hath not hitherto been well understood, tho' there are few in it, of which the right Intelligence is of more Importance.

*There are four Things, says the Philosopher (g), to be observed with respect to Manners; the first and most important of which is that they be Good. There are Manners in a Discourse, or in an Action,*  
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(g) Poet. cap. 15.

*when the one or the other discovers an Inclination, or Resolution such as it is. The Manners are bad, if the Inclination be bad; if it be good, the Manners are good. And these three Things happen in all Conditions of Life; for a Woman may be good, tho' for ordinary they are rather bad than good, and a Valet may be good, tho' we may say in general, that they are absolutely wicked.*

*Aristotle afterwards requires three other Conditions in Manners, viz. That they be conformable to Rank, Age, and Sex: That if one introduces known Personages, they be represented such as they are in fact; which he expresses by saying, That the Manners, ought to be like: In fine, that they ought to be equal, so that if a Person is represented as unequal in his Manners, he ought to be throughout the Piece equally unequal. He adds, That it is a Transgression against the Goodness of Manners when they are not necessary. Now, Gentlemen, there is not the least Shadow of Difficulty in what relates to Conformity, Likeness, and Equality of Manners or Characters. But without doubt you prevent me in what relates to Goodness; for you recall to mind the Esteem Aristotle had for Homer's Poems; in which, sure, there is more than one vicious Character. You likewise recall to mind what you have read in his Poeticks, that follows very soon after what I have just now quoted, viz. That violent and choleric Persons may be represented; and hence you justly conclude, that there is no Appearance that Aristotle should have required all the Characters to be virtuous, tho' he expresses himself, and even reasons in a Manner very proper to make that imagined.*

*The first Commentators upon his Art of Poetry, less anxious to discover his Sense than to make*

make long Discourses upon what he dispatches in a few Words, have not been able to see any in these Words, beyond the Meaning they suggest at first Sight: But it hath since been found necessary to look out for a *Goodness* compatible with Manners morally vicious and with immoral Men; and this Research has produced two different Explications of *Aristotle*: The one is the elder *Corneille*'s, who imagines that by the Goodness of which *Aristotle* speaks, ought to be understood, *An extraordinary striking Character, whether of a vicious or virtuous Habitude, according as the one or the other agrees to the Person introduced*. This striking Elevation, which infinitely pleased *Corneille*, he gave to all his Characters; and no Person has succeeded better in it: And I am not astonished that he should easily have persuaded himself, that a Thing in which he so greatly excell'd, was put in the first Rank, and regarded as the most important of all by the Master Critick. *M. Dacier*, who came afterwards, undertook to undeceive those whom the Authority of this great Poet had seduced. He observes, *That we do not always find this Elevation in the Characters represented by ancient Poets*; and after having added, *that it would not always be consistent with two other requisite Qualities, viz. Likeness and Consistency*, he determines that *Aristotle* meant, *that whether a morally good, or a morally bad Person was introduced, his Character ought always to be well marked*: Which, to say the Truth, surprizes me extremely; for this Explication has precisely the same Fault with *Corneille*'s, *i. e.* They are both equally opposite to the proper Signification of *Aristotle*'s Words. In fact, every one knows that the Word *χρῆσις* is never used but to signify what

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is morally good ; and if one could doubt of *Aristotle's* employing it in that Sense, he need only read on a little farther ; for it is past Dispute, that he only speaks of moral Qualities ; when to explain what he understood by good Manners, he adds, *That the Manners imitated are good, if the Inclination be good; but bad if the Inclination be evil.* It is equally clear, that the Badness he imputes to Valets is a moral Badness ; and from hence we must conclude the Goodness he opposes to it is of the same Kind. *M. Dacier's* Explication has another Default besides peculiar to it ; for you have seen that the fourth Rule which *Aristotle* prescribes relative to Manners, is, *That they ought to be equal, i. e. that each Personage ought to be throughout all to the End, what he at first appears to be, without any Instance belying his Character.* But it is only by preserving throughout the whole Piece this Equality of Characters that one can mark them strongly ; so that well marked and equal Manners are one and the same Thing. It is not therefore *Mr. Dacier's* Fault, if *Aristotle* is not imagined to have been so negligent about what he wrote, as to have given really but three Rules, when he imagined he had laid down four very different ones.

But how can there be any Difficulty here about the Meaning of Goodness ? Should we not rather say, How could *Aristotle*, who approved of representing vicious Characters, pretend, that moral Goodness was what was principal in Manners, and ought to be found in all Characters ? This is what hath appeared difficult, but it really is not. For the Poet meant to recommend a Thing to Poets, which it were to be wished, ours had always before their Eyes, and which  
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some of them seem to have been quite ignorant of, *viz.* That in representing any Character whatsoever, they ought principally to exert themselves to put all the Good into it, with which it can in the Nature of Things be accompanied. When they assign Choler to a Person, let them not make him do base Actions, but so far as Anger might probably have occasioned the Commission of them in a Person who hath Greatness of Soul and many Virtues: Let them not paint him guilty of such odious Vices as Treason, or such detestable Sentiments as Blasphemy. One may be cholerick, without being either treacherous or impious: These are not Affections natural to the human Mind, but the sad Effects of extreme Depravation. Let then your passionate Man be a faithful Friend, and a generous Enemy; let him revere the Gods; and in one Word, let him have all the Virtues that can embellish the Portrait you proposed to make. In the same Manner, if you would imitate the Manners of a Woman, take care not to give her all the Vices the Sex commonly has: However common these Vices may be, yet all Women have them not. Except then from them the Woman you paint, and let there be nothing in her but what is great and commendable, what belongs to her particular Character, or ruling Passion excepted. Do the same with respect to Valets. Don't make them Enemies to their Masters, tho' they be almost always so; make them, on the contrary, faithful and attached to their Masters, and most punctual in their Attendance and Obedience. They ought not to be equal to those whom they serve, neither in Nobleness of Sentiment, nor in Greatness of Actions; that is not suitable to their State: But they ought not to shew too much

much Baseness. On the contrary, their Behaviour ought to raise them as much above Persons of their Condition, as Heroes are above other Men. This, Gentlemen, is what *Aristotle* means by *Goodness*; and what he insinuates again when he adds, *That it would be a Transgression against the Goodness of Manners; if any Thing was suffered to enter into a Character that is not necessary.* What M. Dacier has wrote upon the Subject, is but one continued String of Mistakes, which terminate in a Maxim equally false, and proper, were it adopted and followed, to spoil any Poem, whether Epick or Dramatick; for he imagines, that by *Necessity* is to be understood, that Characters ought to be represented in such a Manner, that any one might easily foresee what Resolutions the Persons to whom they are attributed will take. But it is Time to return to my Subject.

### *Second PART.*

To prove that *Aristotle* hath not laid any Obligation upon a Poet to invent the Subject of his Poem, on purpose to establish a Moral Truth, is to prove in some Sort, that *Homer* had no Design to establish any such Truth by his *Iliad* or *Odysssey*. This Poet was very dexterous at insinuating in an obscure Manner any Maxims he had a Mind; and the Philosopher, who regarded his Works as Models to Epick Poetry, was also too clear-sighted not to discover what he found so expressly marked, and too attached to what was most perfect in every Kind; to have exempted future Poets from a Law of *Homer's* Imposition; and which, beyond Dispute, would give a more noble Subject to the *Epopée*. Thus there-



therefore it would be easy to clear the Matter in Dispute with regard to *Homer*: We would only need to reason a very little upon a true Principle, as they have done upon a false Supposition. You have, we may say to them, fought for the Rules of an Epick Poem in the *Poeticks* of *Aristotle*; and because you thought you had discovered there, that the Poet had a certain Moral Truth in his View when he composes his Poem, you have set your selves to find out such a Truth in the *Iliad*. And it would indeed be surprizing, if with this Prepossession you had not found one. What more natural, than, upon seeing the dismal Effects of Discord among the *Greek* Princes, to imagine *Homer* had described them, to inculcate upon the *Greeks* the Necessity of Union and Concord, in order to repulse their Enemies? This Discovery was too seductive to suffer you to examine it to the Bottom: You seiz'd it with Rapidity, and in the Disposition you were, if any one had come to tell you, that there are however some Particularities in the *Iliad*, which do not permit the attributing such a View to the Poet, you would have answered, *If he had it not, he ought to have had it.* See whither the Authority of *Aristotle* carries you. But the same Authority ought to make a quite opposite Impression upon you; and whereas you have imagined there ought to be a Moral in the *Iliad*, because you fancied *Aristotle* saw one in it, you ought to believe there is none in it, because *Aristotle* saw none in it.

These Reflexions ought to be sufficient to those who profess a close Attachment to this Philosopher's Doctrine: But they would not be of sufficient Weight with others, perhaps the most numerous Party. Accordingly I have not omitted any  
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of the Proofs that the Action of the *Iliad* could furnish me with, to make it appear, that it was not framed to insinuate any one Moral Truth more than another ; and this was the Method I took. First of all I observed, that it could not be doubted but the Poems of *Homer* were very instructive. Then I delineated the Plan of the *Iliad*, after the Model of that of the *Odyssey*, which *Aristotle* has left us in his *Poetics* ; and hence I endeavoured to shew, that the Moral upon which, according to *Father Bossu*, it was formed, is not to be found in it, but indirectly and equivocally. To this I added a particular Detail of the different Instructions discoverable in the *Iliad* ; the greatest Part of which extend almost throughout the Whole, into the Action of the Poem ; some others finish with it ; and one which comes in very late, so occupies afterwards to the End, that it allows us to think of nothing else. The Reflexions these Considerations gave Rise to are very simple : They are all founded on the Nature of Epick Poetry, and the Dispositions of the human Mind. These Observations led me at last to insinuate, that an Epick Poem is by no Means proper for producing the Effect which some will have *Homer* to have composed the *Iliad* for.

I shall not now repeat the Plan of this Poem, which was laid down in the preceding Discourse : If we are surpris'd to find *Jupiter* acting a Part in it, our Wonder ceases when we give Attention to the Religion of *Homer*, and of the *Greeks*, for whom he wrote. It is not an episodick Part, it belongs essentially to the Plan and Fable : To be convinc'd of this it is sufficient to observe, how far the Part *Jupiter* takes in the Quarrel between *Achilles* and *Agamemnon*

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*memnon* affects the whole Matter of the *Iliad*; it produces all the great Events in it, i. e. all the Miseries with which the *Greeks* are overwhelmed. So great is its Influence, that without it nothing that happened could have happened. Are not the Victories of the *Trojans* Consequences of the deceitful Dream that *Jupiter* sent to *Agamemnon*? and to the Fear his Menaces inspired into the Guardian Gods of *Greece*, which forced them to abandon their beloved Nation in the midst of its Distress? This God, whose Power is absolute, with respect to a certain Order and Concatination of Events; but who may be surprised, suffers himself to be imposed upon by *Juno*: *Neptune* immediately becomes favourable to the *Greeks*; and gives Victory to those who a Moment before had been forced to fly: But *Jupiter* awakes, and restores Things into their former Condition; he orders *Neptune* to withdraw; he sends *Apollo* to succour *Hector*; and this God puts the *Greeks* to flight, by presenting an *Egis*.

'Tis easy then to judge what we are to think of such a Plan as that of Father *Bossu*, or any other, in which *Jupiter's* Part is entirely overlook'd. It is not only an imperfect Plan, it is an absolutely false one; because, by suppressing this Part, it makes those who have not studied the *Iliad* with sufficient Attention, believe, that *Homer* had Views which are not compatible with the real Plan of his Poem. *Jupiter* interests himself in the Resentment of *Achilles*, because this Hero had been offended by *Agamemnon*: It is not then the Misunderstanding of two Princes, but the Injustice the one had done to the other, which is the first Cause and original Source of all the Miseries of the *Greeks*.



You might perhaps have reproach'd me, Gentlemen, for having too easily yielded that there is some Glimmering of this Moral in the *Iliad*; if I had not been engaged to it by very strong Motives. The Subject was too large for one Dissertation; and there are some Things one ought not to seem to differ in from others, when one cannot give the Reasons of their Opinion without digressing too much from the Point principally intended. This is what has misled Father *Bossu*, and many after him, that he has only considered in the *Iliad* what appears probable to us, and did not put himself in the Place of a *Grecian* in the Times of *Homer*, who must have had the same Ideas of the Divinity that the Commonalty among the *Greeks* then had, and for a long Time after. 'Tis true, if any one should now make the Gods to act and speak in a Poem, all he did of this Kind would be looked upon as so many Fictions added to the Plan of his Fable, capable of amusing some Readers, and perhaps of shocking others. — But why would we think so? Because we know these Things are impossible, ridiculous, absurd. It was not thought so in *Homer's* Age: The Actions of the Gods might enter into his Plan as well as human Actions; because both appeared equally probable: All the Difference between them lies in this, that Religion disposed the *Greeks* to receive with respectful Admiration whatever was attributed to the Objects of their Worship.

It is true, there have been some Writers even among the Pagans, who have been willing to insinuate, that all these Fictions were allegorical. *Plato* would not have been displeased, that it had been thought so even of some of them which he permitted the Wise to preserve sacred: He has  
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in his *Cratylus* and elsewhere endeavoured expressly to shew, how a Part of what was said of the Gods should be understood. I adventure to say more, it appears evident to me, that *Homer* was fully convinced of the Falsity of the Actions ascribed to the Gods, and I don't doubt but he had the same Opinion of them with *Hesiod*, with whom he generally agrees, who composed his *Theogony*, not merely to have the Pleasure of retailing Fables, but to transmit to Posterity, under those historical Emblems, the History of the Religion of the *Greeks*, and of the more remarkable ancient Events that had happened among them. This, I hope, one Day to make appear. But hence nothing can with any Shew of Reason be concluded against what I have advanced in this Discourse. For it was not for a few Persons as well enlightened as himself, that *Homer* composed his Poems; it was for the whole Body of the Nation. People capable of perceiving its Beauties, only wanted for this Effect a natural Taste, that would not dream of searching for any Thing beyond what the Poet has said. And what could engage them to such a Search? Gods capable of loving mortal Women, and of committing Adulteries, might no doubt have all our Virtues and Vices; and since some of those were ascribed to them, without offending against Probability, there was no Risk run in attributing all the rest to them. Thus *Aristotle* ranks all these Fictions which he regarded as Impossibilities, in the Number of Things that a Poet of the highest Form might make use of as probable, because they passed for such, and were commonly believed. I have already taken Notice of what he says on this Subject.

But if *Homer* had not the Moral of Discord in view; is that to say, he had none in View? This is what I have not adventured to assert; and if I have maintained that he did not propose it, it was not till I had made some Reflexions upon another Moral, which seems to agree better with the Action of the Poem, and of which perhaps *Homer* had no more Thought than of the former. The Anger of *Achilles* excited by the Injustice of *Agamemnon*, being the first Thing the Poet presents to us, and the Miseries of the *Greeks*, with which he so long occupies us, being Consequences of that Injustice, because *Jupiter* interests himself in the Quarrel of *Achilles*; were it true that *Homer* composed his *Iliad* to instruct us, he must have fram'd it to teach us, that Injustice draws upon us many Misfortunes, or, which is the same, that the Master of the Gods is the Avenger of those who are unjustly treated. This Moral seems proper to make a very great Impression upon us. We are touched with what happens to others, in Proportion to the Concern we may have in the Affair. This is a natural Effect of our Self-love. Thus we behold a Quarrel between two Princes, the Poet has not yet made known to us, with great Indifference, if there be not certain Circumstances that we can apply to ourselves: But when such present themselves to our View, they shake our Souls; and nothing is more capable of producing this Effect than Injustice. The Sight of a Person offended moves us, and nothing can exceed the Satisfaction it afterwards gives us to see such a one avenged. It is therefore true, that this Maxim agrees very well to the Events I have mentioned; and that this must be what *Homer* had in View to establish, if he had any Moral in  
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his Eye; or if he compos'd his Poem for any such Purpose: But how little Reason is there to imagine this was his Design? It is certain he had it not in his Thoughts. First, because this Moral does not suit the whole Action, but merely the Beginning of it. An Instruction making the Object of a Poem, and the Purpose of its Fable and Plan, would have the same Extent with the Fable: The Moral and the Fable march Hand in Hand in the Apologue; they set out and end together: It would be so likewise in the Epick Fable, were it compos'd for the Sake of a Moral. Besides, 'tis undeniable that the Poet had no such Intention, because it is not the Reparation of the Injustice which puts a Period to the Miseries it had occasioned. In vain does *Agamemnon* send Messages to *Achilles*, and offer him magnificent Presents: the *Greeks* are not the less distressed, and *Jupiter* is the same to *Achilles* when he is obstinate in his Anger, that he was to him when he was injuriously maltreated. Which is more, this God has no hand in the Change of Affairs. *Achilles* stood in Need of his Aid to avenge him against *Agamemnon*, but his own Valour and Prowess are sufficient to avenge the Death of his Friend, and to deprive the Enemy of their principal Support and Bulwark. The Reconciliation is brought about without the Intervention of any God, and before the Injury is repaired: And it is not till after the provoked Prince had declared in an Assembly of the *Greeks*, that he was resolv'd to go out against the Enemy, that *Ulysses* caus'd a Satisfaction to be given him, of which he had no longer any Thoughts.

Now, if *Homer* neither intended to represent by the *Iliad* the doleful Consequences of Discord, as hath been commonly apprehended from a false Notion of the Plan of this Poem, nor the Miseries which attend Injustice, as the real Plan of this Poem would make one think at first Sight, it is certainly in vain to look out for any other Moral in it, that was its principal Scope. If many present themselves, but some of them are too feebly marked, or if they result from Circumstances rather than from the Fable, or if, as the Moral of Injustice, they only agree to one Part of the same Fable; or, in fine, if they are not so much particular Instructions, as Pictures including many different Instructions, then, there is none in it which does not want one or more of the Qualities requisite to make a Moral to be considered as the Object of the Poem. Let us therefore give ourselves the Pleasure of finding them only, but let us not imagine that they made any Part of the Poet's Intention, as it were not sufficient Glory to him, that every one of them was the Effect of his Ability in disposing and ranging the Events he sings, and in drawing and keeping up the Characters he paints.

In this chiefly does *Homer's* Merit lie. Whatever Criticks may have found Fault with in his *Iliad*; at least nothing is more magnificent than the Train of Events of which he has compos'd his Action, and that Concourse of Heroes he has brought together, all of them resembling one another in the Love of Glory; and yet all differing from each other by most distinguishable Qualities.—— In this *Homer* shines: 'Tis thus he shews himself a Poet, the greatest of Poets. But this Variety of Events and Characters may  
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sufficiently convince us, that *Homer* could not have had it in his View to establish any one particular Truth. There results from it a Variety of admirable Lessons, which all of them strike in Proportion as the Events and Characters whence they result are better represented. Wherefore the Poet could not expect that any one would have more force than any other, far less principally attract our Attention; and to speak frankly, it is but to do justice to him, to shew he had not the Views which have been ascribed to him.

In reality, one may compose several Songs, in order to make a certain Impression upon our Minds, without reckoning much on the Success: But who will take the Labour of composing a Poem of such Extent as the *Iliad*, without hoping to succeed? Or, if any one could be found, who should think of such an Enterprize, what would we think of him, if he should take a certain Method of rendering twenty other Truths more touching than that which he chiefly intended to inculcate? Yet this is what *Homer* is said to have done, when it is pretended that he designed to establish this Verity, *That good Intelligence or Harmony gives Success to Undertakings, and that Misunderstanding and Division defeats them.* For if we grant more to the Defenders of this Opinion, than they will demand—yielding to them, that upon seeing a Quarrel arise between the two Princes, we are principally moved with the Resolution one of them takes no longer to fight for the common Cause—Let us add, if they please, that this Emotion will be strong enough to keep itself up amidst that long Detail of Men and Ships that the Quarrel of *Mene-laüs* puts into Motion; a Detail very entertaining



ing to the *Greeks*, tho' it cannot be so to us ; — and to carry our Complaisance yet farther, let us say, that if the first Misfortunes of the *Greeks*, after *Achilles* retires, gives us a high Idea of this Prince, upon whom the Happiness and Glory of so many Nations depends ; or if they lead us to reflect upon the Effects of Injustice, that we are, however, less struck with them than the Consequences of the Discord : Yet what Images come immediately after to turn away our Attention from this Object ? We shall scarcely be able to keep our Minds fixed upon the Consequences of *Achilles's* Absence, when we once come to see that splendid Picture of absolute Sovereignty, of which I gave you a Sketch in my first Discourse. And when we see the unrelenting, inflexible Hardness of this Hero, will not this be the only Object that then strikes us ? May I not say, we must have very inhuman Hearts, if it do not make a very deep Impression upon us ? All that succeeds only serves to entertain and fortify the Sentiments that it awakens in us ; and we must conceive so much the greater Aversion against such Conduct as that of *Achilles*, that it produces such dismal Effects. The *Greeks* are on the Brink of Ruin : *Patroclus*, hitherto restrained from assisting them by his Attachment to his Master, can no longer hide his Affliction, it draws Tears from his Eyes : *Achilles* cannot see him so deeply touched without being moved : And is not our Heart ravished by this Passage ? Did ever one see the Force of Friendship pictured in a more lively, affecting Manner ? You know, Gentlemen, what the Poet makes his Hero do, and all the Adventures of *Patroclus*, in which he so warmly interests us. His Death brings about great Changes,

ges, and one would think that *Homer* desired it should be regarded as one of those Devotements to one's Country, of which we find Examples in Antiquity, the Consequences of which are truly surprising. *Achilles* is reconciled to *Agamemnon*; he makes a dreadful Slaughter among the Enemy; *Hector* their most powerful Prop falls under his Blow. It is here that we ought to see the happy Effects of Concord: But how far is this Picture, supposing it exact, removed from that by which it ought to have been plac'd, in order to have this Effect? So many Things come one after another to turn aside our Eyes from the Consequences of Dissension, that we now scarcely remember to have ever thought of it. Without this Contrast however, we admire here, that which alone is truly admirable in it, and which is painted out with the strongest Strokes, I mean, the extraordinary Valour of *Achilles*: He himself is as a whole Army; and the *Greek* Heroes, whose Actions had filled us heretofore with such Amazement, are now no more but mere Spectators of his Combats, or rather of his Victories. If there be room left for any other Reflexion, it is upon the Attachment of this Hero to his Friend's Memory, of whom he is incessantly speaking; and for whose Sake, surpassing as it were himself, he does more prodigious Feats in one Day, than he had done in all the nine Years of the War. This Friendship fills our Attention; it is in Honour to the Shade of *Patroclus*, that he makes Games to be celebrated by the *Grecian* Princes. In fine, we cannot be very sensible to what the Poet says with respect to *Hector's* Body, so remote are these Manners and Customs from ours: But the Action would have finished very ill to *Greeks*, if they had seen  
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Funeral Honours refused to such a Prince as *Hector*; and to give them full Satisfaction, it was necessary, that the victorious Hero should receive a Recompence suitable to his Valour. This Satisfaction was to them one principal Effect of the Poem, and what could not fail to fix their Attention.

Thus in reading the *Iliad*, one receives, as hath been said, very many successive Impressions very different from one another. If some of them are weaker than the rest, it must be attributed to one of these two Causes. Either the Picture the Poet presents us with is compounded of several Parts, which tho' connected together in a certain Manner, yet do not appear all at one View: Or we have many Principles and Dispositions in us, which keep us from reflecting upon the Truths the Picture is qualified to bring across our Minds. It would be astonishing, if in the continual Admiration the Poet holds us by a Succession of admirable Pictures, we were not less struck by some which he only shews us by Parts, than by others which we see all at once, and without any Interruption. Besides, it is certain that our Passions blind us to those Truths which are opposite to them; it requires a great deal of Art to be able to make us perceive them, or to turn our Eyes towards them: But of all the Means to which one may have Recourse, there is none more feeble, or from which less Success can be expected, than mixing and confounding these Truths with many others, every one of which is equally capable of moving us by itself. And this shews, that were the Moral of Discord less equivocal than it is, we have no Reason to think *Homer* had it in his View as the Scope of his *Iliad*.



In fact, the *Greeks* were divided in his Time: The *Dorians* had chased the *Achaëans*, and the latter were split into two Parties, one of which had driven out the *Ionians* in their Turn. Nothing followed after this but Disorder and Confusion; one Part of the *Greeks* had been forced to settle themselves beyond Sea, and the Animosities that such Revolutions had occasioned, were not like to be soon extinguished: But is it credible that *Homer* was such a Stranger to the Nature of Passions, as to imagine that he could extirpate such rooted Feuds, and so just on the Side of those who had been expelled their Country, by a Poem, in which he joined with the Recital of a Quarrel between two Princes, I say an exact and particular Recital, an Infinity of Events and Characters to astonish his Readers, all of which could not fail to make a different Impression upon them? I affirm that there is no ground to charge him with so ill-concerted a Project; and if one may oppose Conjecture to Conjecture, I should rather choose to say, that he purposed on the contrary to animate the *Greeks*, one Party against another: For he liv'd amidst Men descended from the Heroes, whose Exploits he sung. And what does he insinuate into them? The most proper Motives in the World to inspire the Desire of returning into *Europe*; for he tells them, that their Ancestors had some little Time before reigned in a fine Country, that the *Athenians* had combated with them against the *Trojans*; and that those Heroes were sprung from most illustrious Progenitors, who were singularly protected by the Gods: But this fine Country which he takes such care to describe all the Charms of, the *Dorians* had taken from them; and that they had the  
*Athenians*

*Athenians* for their Enemy, with whom the *Achaëans* and *Ionians* had always been in a close Confederacy. One might therefore imagine, that the Poet's Design was to revive the Courage of the *Greeks* established in *Asia*, and to incite them to make a League with the *Athenians* and other *Greeks* of *Europe*, to undertake the Conquest of *Peloponese*, as their Forefathers had that of *Troy*. Many Things might be alledged to fortify this Imagination; for *Homer* gives no Share of the *Trojan* War to the *Dorians*, who then inhabited the Country just mentioned, he never names them but in one Passage of the *Odyssey* (g), to take Notice that they were amongst those Strangers who had possessed themselves of a Part of the Island of *Crete*; and if he mentions in the Number of the Chiefs of the Army three of *Hercules*; who fought under the Banner of *Agamemnon*, viz. *Tlepolemus*, *Phidippus* and *Antiphus*, it is only to make the first die by the Hands of *Sarpedon*, and to leave the other two in Obscurity (h). But tho' such a Project be not unworthy of so great a Genius as *Homer*; and tho' there be nothing in the *Iliad* that is contrary to it, yet I am far from asserting he composed his Poem in this View; and I offer this purely as a Conjecture, which its Novelty is sufficient to render suspicious, tho' it may be more probable than an Infinity of others.

### Third PART.

I come now to review what I offered to shew, that there is no Reason obliging a Poet to propose a Moral Truth for the Object of his Poem.

(g) L. 9. v. 177.

(h) *Iliad*, I. 5.

I advanced two Proofs of this. *That the Idea of a Moral, as its Object, does not belong to the Idea of an Epick Poem; and that a Law that cannot be put in Practice, ought not to be imposed upon a Poet.*

1. I would gladly not trouble you, Gentlemen, with a new Detail of Things on this Subject, but they are necessary to set the Proof I have taken from the very Nature of the *Epopée* in its full Light. Having considered nothing more in the Action but the Unity, the Grandeur, and the Probability, to which I added Harmony, that is to say, Versification; the Idea that I have given of it cannot appear exact to those who have been accustomed to join other Things to it. They will say, *One Man ought to have the principal Share in the Events; and that there is besides a particular Manner in ranging the Events in the Recital, so necessary to an Epick Poem, that it cannot be one without it.*

I grant them all this very willingly: I shall even add, That the Narration ought not to be simple Narrative, but that it is requisite a Part of it should be in the Way of Imitation, to use *Plato's* Expression (i). *A simple Narrative is that in which the Writer never hides himself, but speaks all in his own Name:* This does not agree with the Nature of an Epick Poem, in which a Poet ought not only to recite, but introduce, as it were upon the Stage, Actors who speak for themselves; and by this is an Epick Poem no less distinguished from History, and from Dramatick Poetry, than by the Arrangement of the Events. But who sees not at first, that the Unity of a Hero, or more properly speaking, the Unity of his Interest, is comprised in the Unity of Action,

(i) Of a Republick, l. 3.



to which the Poem does not give a Being, but only a Form, which it may so well be without, that different ones are given to the same Action, according to the Uses proposed to be made of it.

It does not belong to the present Question, what may be necessary to the Perfection of an Epick Poem, its Fable is the only Thing that demands our Attention at present; and if we would speak of it with that Precision which makes the Merit of Works in which the Arts are treated of, we ought to separate it from every Thing that does not appertain to its Essence, and without which it can subsist. The Qualities it receives after it is once employed, are very indifferent to us; we are only concerned with those it stands in Need of in order to be employed. But there are no others besides Unity, Greatness, and Probability. I therefore had Reason to say, that a Moral is not included in the Idea of an Epick Poem, since we can conceive one great and probable Action, without having it in our View to establish any one particular Moral. After all, to mix and confound here what does, with what does not regard the Narrative, would make no Change in the Matter. Let the Action be disposed in whatever Manner, and let the Poet always speak, or be obliged to introduce Persons speaking, as such Differences could not weaken the Law about a Moral, were it well established from other Considerations, so they can, as little serve to establish it.

I have already prevented a seeming Difficulty that might here be raised. If we consider, some may tell me, the Nature of the Apologue, it is the Recital of an Action which is neither possible nor probable, or at least needs not be such. Now the

Now the Want of Possibility and Probability in a Recital, does not render a Moral more necessary to it, than to another which has these two Qualities; yet a Moral is essential to the Apologue; why then should it not be so to the *Epopée*?

To this it may be answered, *That the Recital of an Action which appears impossible to us, and which is devoid of Probability, cannot please us by itself, and stands in Need of something to attract us, if a Writer would engage us to bear him with any Satisfaction.* But tho' this Answer be, in my Opinion, very just, yet it is not sufficient; and it ought to be added, conformably to what I have said, *that a Moral is essential to the Apologue, because all the Writers of them have composed their Fables on purpose to insinuate Moral Truths by them; and not to an Epick Poem, because no Poet has composed an Epick Poem in that View.* There are two Things to consider in Works of Genius; Nature, and the Art, which adds to Nature. What Art adds is, what the Persons who have succeeded in a certain Kind of Works have always, or almost always observed, tho' Nature did not require it: We cannot have Success like them, but by taking the like Method with them; and it is in this Sense only, that such Things are essential to such or such a Composition. A Moral therefore is not essential to Epick Poetry: I say more, it is impracticable in it; and with this I shall conclude.

2. I have observed, that Greatness is one necessary Quality of this Poem. But there are two Sorts of Greatness; one of which consists in this, that great Events are there narrated, or extraordinary Persons are there represented, in whom every thing appears great to us. This Grandeur is necessary to the Epick in such a

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Manner, as does not hinder its giving Place to many Facts which have not these Qualities. The other Greatness that its Action requires, is a Quality belonging to this Action considered in its whole Extent. It results from a great Number of Circumstances accompanying the Subject, which are closely and intimately connected with it, and which do indeed make one Whole with it. If you take away these Circumstances, the Action will be reduced to almost nothing: It will not be able to interest us, and perhaps it will appear to us little in Proportion as it is more pompously set out. But in a Moral Action, that is, in an Action wherein Characters and Passions are painted out, the greater Part of Circumstances ought to be Moral; and all such will be to us so many Occasions of thinking on a great Number of Truths, which will be no less different from one another, than the Events giving Rise to them. It is then evident, that the Rule about a Moral is repugnant to the Nature of the *Epopée*, because, according to this Rule, the Moral resulting from the Action ought to be one, as the Action is one.

The Action of the *Epopée* is one, when it wholly centers in one Interest respecting one Person. The Interest of the Action in the *Iliad* is the Glory of *Achilles*, and that Glory springs out of the Bosom of the Injury done to him by *Agamemnon*. His Arms had hitherto been attended with the happiest Success, Victory had ever followed him; and it was perceived that it was he who must accomplish the great Enterprize that armed all *Greece*. Justly provoked by an Affront from the General, he withdraws, and his Absence gives Occasion to the other Heroes of his Nation to display most surprising Valour: But

*Hector*



*Heſtor* is too mighty for them all, and upon him depends the Deſtiny of *Troy*. *Patroclus*, moved by the Miſeries of his Compatriots, goes with *Achilles's* Conſent, and his Arms, to engage the Enemy, whom the very Sight of theſe Arms always threw into a Conſternation. He makes a bloody Havock, and had been invincible if *Heſtor* had not met with him. His Death made the *Greeks* fear the ſame Diſaſters from which his Arm had delivered them; but at the ſame Time it rouses *Achilles*: And when he comes forth to the Battle, all other Valour (pardon the Expreſſion, diſappears before his) he diſpoſes of the Lives of the *Trojans* at his Pleaſure, ſo eaſy is Conqueſt to him. *Heſtor* alone is able to make any Reſiſtance, but forced to fly; in his Flight he falls, and by his Death, which brought along with it the taking of *Troy*, the Hero who is the Object of the Poem having accompliſhed his higheſt Deſtiny, is acknowledged the moſt valiant of Men, the Honour of his Country, and the Ruin of its Enemies. In the ſame Manner, the Intereſt of the Action in the *Odyſſey* is the happy Return of *Ulyſſes* to his Country, thro' many Difficulties, which he ſurmounts by his Wiſdom: And the Intereſt of the Action in the *Æneid* is the Settlement of *Æneas* in *Italy*, where he knows the Fates had prepared for his Poſterity a moſt extraordinary Empire and Renown: A Settlement he makes in Oppoſition to many Difficulties, which he ſurmounts by his Valour, and by the Protection of the Gods merited by his Piety. The Circumſtances in theſe Actions do not hurt their Unity, becauſe they ariſe out of the Eſſence of the Action itſelf, becauſe each follows neceſſarily or probably every other; and they all contribute to give Luſtre to the

Qualities of the Hero, which ought to produce the happy Effect in which he is interested. These three Conditions are absolutely necessary to render an Action truly one ; and if hitherto the latter hath not been attended to, it is because due Attention hath not been given to the Unity of Interest, in order to find out its Consequences.

It follows from hence, that, in order to the Unity of the Moral, the particular Truths to which the Circumstances of the Poem may lead our Reflexion, must arise out of the Essence of the principal Moral, they must all necessarily or probably follow one another, and concur to render the Truth the Poet proposed to establish more evident, more sensible, more touching. But because the Moral Circumstances of Actions cannot differ from one another, unless there be Differences in the Characters, and in the Actions which the Characters produce, it is manifest from hence, that the Truths which the Actions may suggest to us, will seldom or never have any Connexion one with another, but will relate either to different Vices, of which they will excite our Horror, or to different Virtues of which they will render us enamoured.

I do not deny that one may not compose an Epick Poem as a Romance, which shall be proper to instruct a Prince, for Instance, in the Arts of Government : But instead of one Maxim, this Poem will contain many, which shall have no Resemblance but in this Respect, that they have all the same End ; I would say, that they all contribute to the Instruction of Persons in the same Condition ; but this is not the present Question.

tion. The Moral, of which I am speaking, is one Maxim, which ought so to reign throughout the Poem, that if there be any others, they shall only serve to enforce it the more powerfully upon our Minds, as the Circumstances of the Action only serve to render the Event more interesting. 'Tis a Moral of this Sort that I assert to be impossible to put in Practice: But were it practicable, far from giving any new Beauty to the Poem, it would disfigure it entirely, and produce one of the greatest Faults to be avoided in it; since the Attention of the Reader would be continually and equally divided between observing the Succession of Facts leading to the chief Event, and the Succession of Truths contributing to confirm and enforce the principal Moral.

But Father *Bossu*, perhaps, did not intend to speak of such a Moral as I have defined. I answer in two Words: Father *Bossu* pretends, *That the Moral is the Foundation of the Fable; and that it must be one as the Action.* This is his Principle. It is no Matter whether he saw the Consequences of it or not, they are not the less necessary on that Account; and we are nevertheless authorized to conclude, that these Consequences being opposite to the Nature of the *Epopée*, the Principle from which they follow cannot be true. Besides, should I grant that we might oblige a Poet to choose some Moral for the Basis of his Fable, and yet leave him at Liberty to insinuate any other Truths he pleased by the different Parts of his Action, Father *Bossu* would gain nothing by this Concession: For it is certain, that in this Case the Maxim, which would be the Object of the Poem, would be, as it were, smother'd by the other Truths,



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(over which however it ought to have a very distinguishable Superiority) in such a Manner that very few Persons would be able to perceive it, and the few who did, would but barely see it, and not be very deeply impressed by it. You have seen a Proof of this in my Observations upon the Truths to which the different Circumstances of the Action in the *Iliad* lead us.

CONCLUSION.

I am apt to think it hath been sufficiently proved, that *Aristotle* had no Intention to impose an Obligation upon Poets to establish a particular Truth, which should be, as it were, the Basis of the Fable, or the Action in their Poems: That *Homer* did not compose his Poems with a View to establish any Truth of this Kind; and that the Action of a Poem requires no such Thing. I have proved likewise, that if one takes heed to what he demands, when he requires that a Moral should be at the Bottom of the Action in an Epick Poem, he must find that this is to exact an Impossibility; or what would, if it could be done, only serve to spoil the Poem; and that in case one would have the Moral to result only from the entire Poem, the Embarrassment would be no less, because a Truth, which could not be discerned, but through many Truths having no relation to it, all equally capable of attracting our Attention, could hardly be discovered. Now, I believe, I need not stay to examine whether such a Moral would not contribute, at least, to render the Poem more regular, by rendering the Unity of the Action more striking; for it is certain, from what hath been suggested, that it would not in the least contribute to that Effect. Moreover,  
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it would be to abuse a Moral, to choose one for the Bottom of the Fable, as if one designed to enforce it upon the Reader's Mind, whilst in the mean Time it could have no other Effect, but to give a certain Form to the Poem. In fine, the Action of an Epick Poem has in itself, and without any Assistance so very unsuitable to its Nature, all that is wanting to perfect Unity. 'Tis true, neither Father *Bossu*, nor others who have treated of Epick Poetry, seem to have seen in what the Nature of this Unity consisted; and to have only known some of its exterior Properties: But I think I have now said enough of it, to leave no Room for desiring more upon the Subject.



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*An ANSWER to a MEMOIR  
communicated to the Academy,  
entituled, A Dissertation in which  
it is enquired, Whether it be ne-  
cessary that an Epick Poem ought  
to have a Relation to a Moral  
Truth?*

*By Mr. L'Abbé VATRY.*

*Read to the Academy of Literature, November  
22d, 1731\*.*

**I**N a Discourse lately communicated to the Academy, the Author undertook to refute the Sentiment of Father *Bossu*, with Regard to the Moral that ought to result from an Epick Poem. Father *Bossu*'s Opinion is the same I attempted some time ago to confirm by new Arguments ; and therefore this Controversy concerns me ; and I the more willingly engage in it, because the Opinion I have defended appears not only more probable,

\* *Memoirs, Tom. 9.*



bable, but casts a Light upon the ancient Poets, which discovers Beauties in them we cannot perceive, if we read them with other Ideas before our Minds.

To follow the same Order this Author takes, I shall divide this Discourse into three Parts. In the first I shall examine *Aristotle's* Sentiments concerning Epick Poetry. In the second I shall endeavour to shew, that *Homer* has observed the Moral Rule in his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In the third I shall give an Answer to the Difficulties this Obligation is thought to lay Poets under. After a few Encomiums upon *Aristotle* he adds, *That we would have found very little to do after this Philosopher, if he had discoursed as clearly as his Sentiments are just.* Now, I own, that *Aristotle's Poeticks* are full of Difficulties. The Contrariety among his Expositors, who are ever contradicting one another, and having Recourse to Emendations of the Text, are a sufficient Proof of his Obscurity : But I think the Blame is not to be charged to *Aristotle's* Account : On the contrary, he seems to me to have neglected nothing to avoid Obscurity ; he gives Definitions of every thing, and illustrates all his Positions by Examples. Whence then this Want of Perspicuity ?

1. His Poeticks must be considered as a Fragment, or a small Part of a more considerable Work. *Aristotle* (k) himself, and other Ancients, quote a third Book : There remains but one, and there is Ground to think it is not entire. In the Beginning of this sixth Chapter, *Aristotle* promises to treat of the *Epopœe*, and of Comedy ; yet he says nothing at all, or but very little of Comedy. Besides, he had explained at great length

(k) Rhet. lib. 3.

length several things which now appear to us unintelligible, because the Passages are now lost which would have set them in a clear Light. For Instance, he says in the eighth Book of his *Republick*, *That he had treated in his Poeticks with great Care and Accuracy, what regards "the Purgation of the Passions."* Yet we find nothing of all this in his *Poeticks*. 'Tis well known, that this is the Affair that has most of all embarrassed his Interpreters. In fine, when he cites Examples, he takes them from Poets well known in his Time, the greater Part of which are now lost. It is not then surprising, that *Aristotle* should be obscure to us, who want the Assistances this Philosopher thought necessary to his Cotemporaries.

The Art of Poetry is a Subject that requires a certain Turn of Imagination, not common to all the World, in order to be rightly understood: Distance of Time, Diversity of Manners, Religion, Government, make great Changes in the Ideas of Mankind. The *Greeks* had not the same Conceptions of Poetry we have, yet we read the Ancients with the Prepossessions our Poets have instilled into us: We want to find our own Notions in their Works, and we say they are ill explained when they are not made to speak in our Manner. Other Reasons might be given for the Obscurity for which *Aristotle* is so often reproached; but these are, I imagine, sufficient to shew, that when we do not understand him, it is not a little our own Fault; or, at least, that it is more owing to the Changes and Destruction Time has made, than to the Author's Negligence.

After having said these few Things for *Aristotle's* Justification, I come to examine his Doctrine

trine concerning the Epick Fable. Fable, in general, is a Discourse invented to form the Manners by Instructions disguised under the Allegory of an Action. This Definition certainly agrees to the *Apologue*. It is only necessary here to prove, that according to *Aristotle* it agrees equally to the Epick Fable. By shewing this I shall have proved what is disputed. By the Definition I have given, it is manifest, that Fable consists of two Parts, which it is of Importance to distinguish; the Action recited, and the Instruction concealed under the Allegory of the Action. *Aristotle* has expatiated on the Fable, as it is the Recital of an Action. It is in this Sense he defines it thus, *I understand by the Fable the Composition of Things*. He often repeats the same Explication, only sometimes in the Room of the Word *ὑπόθεσις* he substitutes *ὑπόστασις*, which signifies Constitution, and so serves to make his Meaning more determinate, or less equivocal. It is evident therefore that *Aristotle* understood by the Fable the whole Subject, the whole Action in the Poem disposed in a certain Manner: And in this he and Father *Bossu* exactly agree. For the latter, as well as the former, will have the Fable to be the whole Subject of the Poem, or Progress of the Action; it is the Basis of his whole Doctrine: And so far is *Aristotle's* Definition from being contrary to the *Father's*, as is pretended, that it is his first Principle, and he admits it from the Beginning with all the Consequences *Aristotle* had drawn from it. But say they, *The Father will have the Action to be allegorical, and to insinuate an Instruction; and this Aristotle does not say*. It is true, *Aristotle* has treated at great length of the Epick Fable, as it is the Recital of an Action,



tion, and has not spoke with the same Perspicuity and Extent of the Truth hid under the Allegory of the Action: But it is no less true, that he has supposed this. One cannot doubt of it, if he is read with any Degree of Attention.

Had *Aristotle* thought that the Action needed not to be allegorical, he would not have said, *That a Poem was more philosophical and moral than History.* The Author of the Memoir who denies the Allegory, says frequently, *That an Epick Poem is not more Moral than a History.* Nothing can follow more necessarily from his Principles: *Whatever*, says he, *is possible in the Order of Events, in which the human Passions have any Share, is instructive, or includes Maxims for our Conduct.* But the Facts narrated in a History are, at least, as possible as those recited in a Poem; and frequently a Piece of History is no less a Picture of human Passions than a Poem; it is therefore evident that a Poem is not more instructive than History. Yet *Aristotle* affirms the contrary, and will have *a Poem to be more philosophical and moral than History.* Since therefore *Aristotle* is against the Author of the Memoir in the Consequences, I conclude that he is against him likewise in the Principles.

And why, Gentlemen, will *Aristotle* have a Poem to be more instructive than a History? *It is*, says this Philosopher, *because a Poem represents general Things, and History singular Things. A singular Thing is what Alcibiades did or suffered. A general Thing, is what any Body of such and such a Character would do or say with Probability or Necessity.*

Now, to say the Action of an Epick Poem is general, and not singular or particular, and that for this Reason an Epick Poem is more instructive

fructive than History ; is it not the same as to say, that the Action of an Epick Poem is allegorical and moral ? An allegorical Action, what is it, but an Action feigned to represent what ordinarily passes among Men ; and it is not instructive, but because it does not describe such or such a Thing in particular, but all Men in general ; and one may apply it to what we daily see. Thus when we say the Fable of the Wolf and the Lamb is an Allegory invented to instruct, it is because the Tale does not tell what really happened between a Wolf and a Lamb, but what a Wolf would probably have said or done to a Lamb, *i. e.* a stronger Person to a weaker. In the same Manner we say the *Iliad* is an allegorical Recital, because there we are not told what truly happened to *Achilles* and *Agamemnon*, but what might probably have happened to them, and will always happen to Chiefs in Alliance who live in Discord. Never were two Persons more near one to another in their Sentiments, than *Aristotle* and Father *Bossu* are in this Point : And, I confess, I can't comprehend how any one could conclude from this Passage, that *Aristotle* thought the End of the *Epopée* was not to instruct, but to please.

A Poet of this Opinion, who denied the Necessity of an Allegory, were he to compose an Epick Poem, would undoubtedly look about in fabulous or true History, or in his own Imagination, for some great Subject capable of striking and astonishing ; and after having modelled it according to certain Rules, he would give it all the Embellishments it was susceptible of : 'Tis thus all the Poets since *Virgil* have gone to Work ; but these are not *Aristotle's* Maxims. He would have the Poet form a Fable, before he  
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gives Names to his Personages. And what means such a naked Fable, which hath no Relation to a particular Hero, and retraces no known Action? He does not say, that the Fable ought to contain so much as any thing Marvellous; there is nothing of that Kind in the two Fables, of which he gives us the Plans; and yet this is what he calls the Beginning and the Soul of the Poem (*Αρχή και Ψυχή*.) The Names are but Accessories, and are only impos'd to give the Fable the Probability it ought to have. Father *Bossu* could not express himself otherwise.

*The Error of this Father*, 'tis said, *proceeded from his reading Æsop before he studied Aristotle's Poeticks; he no sooner saw the Word Fable given to the Action of a Poem, than he imagined this Action must have two essential Parts, Fiction and a Moral.* I am not afraid that many will give into this Conjecture, or fancy the *Father* to have been capable of such a Mistake. His Book is the Fruit of long Labour and deep Reflexion, an uninterrupted Study of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Æneid*, and of an accurate Comparison of these Poems with the Principles of *Aristotle* and *Horace*. It would indeed be astonishing, if a Mistake had produced a System equally well founded on good Sense, and on the Authorities of ancient Masters of the Art, and in which there is no Inconsistency. It would have been much easier to have distinguished several Sorts of Fables, than to reduce to one Kind Dramatick, Epick, and Apologue. This Distinction presents itself at first Blush to those who have not founded the Matter to the Bottom: It is only by searching profoundly into the Subject that one is led Step by Step thro' a necessary Train of Consequences



sequences to discern, that all Fables are of the same Nature, tho' of different Sorts.

But, it is farther said, *That Fable is a Fiction properly so called, and of the Nature of Apologues, which have neither Possibility nor Probability; whereas it is essential to the Fable of an Epick Poem to be possible and probable.* I confess I do not understand what is meant by a Fiction properly so called: As to Apologues, it does not appear true to me, that they have neither Possibility nor Probability: What is essential to them is the concealing a Truth under an Allegory, as the Ancients tell us; every thing else is accidental to it. Let an Apologue be possible or not, it is of no Importance: There are many in *La Fontaine*, which are very possible, and yet they are nevertheless true Apologues. As for Probability, the Apologue is so far from not admitting of it, that it absolutely requires it. *Fabula, says Priscian, est oratio ficta verisimili dispositione imaginem exhibens veritatis.* A Thing may be probable which is not possible, and a Thing may be not only possible but real Fact, which has not Poetick Probability. It can never happen that a Wolf and a Lamb should enter into a Conference; yet there is a Way of rendering their Conferences probable, as *Æsop*, *Phædrus* and *La Fontaine* have done. This Probability consists in nothing else, but in making them say nothing those whom they represent would not say. Thus when the Wolf says nothing to the Lamb in the Fable but what the Stronger says to the Weaker, the Probability is exactly kept up. As for the Epick Fable, it is essential to it as the Apologue to be probable, but it does not belong to its Essence to be possible. All that *Homer* says of the Gods, all he tells us of *Circe's* Enchantments, is most assuredly  
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not possible ; and yet *Aristotle* makes no difficulty of proposing the Fables of the *Iliad*, and *Odyssey*, as Models of probable Poems.

As for the Father's Opinion, it is not generally adopted by *Aristotle's* Commentators. You will not find it either in *Robertel*, *Victorius*, *Manbrun*, *Castelvetro*, *Heinsius*, nor *Tasso*. And that Unanimity of his Expositors in not finding the Moral Rule in *Aristotle's Poeticks* furnishes a sort of Objection against it, which I am not a little surpris'd not to have found made. The Fault of the greater Part of his Commentaries lies in their adhering too close to the Letter of the Text, and in not endeavouring to interpret him by the Poets, by *Homer* principally : Had they taken this Method, Father *Bossu* and they must have met.

See in two Words, how this Critick proves his System to be the same with *Aristotle's*. *Aristotle* will have a *Poem* to be more instructive and more moral than *History*. *History* however is instructive. An *Epick Poem* must then include some Instruction in another Manner than *History* does. *Aristotle* gives us to understand, *that it is because the Action in an Epick Poem is general, and that those narrated in History are particular* : But to be general is the same as to be allegorical. On the other Side, according to the Philosopher, *the Action of an Epick Poem ought to be one*, it therefore forms an Allegory which is one ; and the Instruction it conveys is one, and results from the Whole of the Action.

Now that I have sufficiently clear'd *Aristotle's* Doctrine, I proceed to examine the two Poems of *Homer*, which is the second Thing I proposed.

To prove, That Homer proposed to establish one Moral Truth in each of his Poems, and that the Fable in each is an Apologue, I need only apply the Principles I have shewn to be Aristotle's, to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

The Fables of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are true Apologues, if they have the two Parts constituting the Essence of an Apologue; viz. An Action which is one Whole, and a general Truth resulting from this Action: But this is easily discoverable in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Let us first examine the *Iliad*: What is the Action in it? Nothing can be better marked; nothing can be less contestable; it is the Anger of Achilles. This makes the Subject of the Poem. Here is the entire Plan of it in two Words. Achilles and Agamemnon quarrel; Achilles, being provoked, separates himself from the rest of the Greeks; and will not join with them in fighting against the Enemy: From this Moment the Greeks are worsted by the Trojans. Reduced to the last Extremity they depute the principal Captains of the Army to propose the most honourable and advantageous Conditions to Achilles; if he would pity their Distress and rejoin them. Achilles is inflexible, he is unmoved by their most elegant Discourses, and by the Entreaties of his best Friends: He despises the Presents they offer, and makes a harsh Reply to the Message they bring him from Agamemnon. Patroclus is despairingly afflicted, and seeing the Greeks beaten once more, and their bravest Generals brought back from the Battle half dead, he reproaches Achilles in the most affecting Manner: Achilles permits him to put on his Armour, and to go to the Battle: The Trojans taking him for Achilles fly before him: But Hec-



tor withstands and kills him. Then Achilles becomes enraged, his Grief for the Loss of his Friend gets the Ascendant over his Hatred of Agamemnon. He engages with Hector and kills him, and then his Wrath being over, the Poem ceases. This Anger, you see, begins with the Poem; it is it which gives occasion to all the Distress in it; it is it likewise, that by ceasing, puts a Period to the Intrigue: It is impossible to find another Action in the *Iliad*, that thus reigns universally throughout the Whole of it. Whence it is plain, that it is truly the Fable, *i. e.* according to *Aristotle*, the Composition of Things, and according to *Bossu*, the Body of the Apologue.

The Moral, which is the Soul of it, is no less easy to be perceived. I doubt whether there be any Fable in *Æsop*, the Allegory of which is more visible. Upon seeing the fatal Consequences of the Quarrel between *Achilles* and *Agamemnon*, and all the Calamities with which the *Greeks* are overwhelmed, while the Diffension between these two Princes lasts, who does not immediately reflect upon the fatal Influence of Discord between Chiefs upon their Enterprizes? This Truth makes itself to be felt throughout the whole *Iliad*, and the Miseries the *Greeks* suffer imprint it more deeply on the Mind, than the best expressed Maxims can. Besides, this Moral does not depend upon any single Part of the Action; it is the Essence of the Poem, it is the whole Subject, the whole Action proclaims it. The Author of the Memoir grants, That there is some faint Glimmering of this Moral; but he affirms that *Homer* had it not in his View in his Composition. Let *Homer* have had, or not had it in his View, this is what we are not much concerned about; but who can induce himself to think, that so noble

noble a View, so enforced, so closely pursued, is purely the Effect of Chance? and that a Poet could have had such wonderful Success in instructing us, without having had any such Intention? Does not *Homer*, at his setting out, precisely declare his principal Intention? *Muse*, says he, *sing the Anger of Achilles, the pernicious Anger which occasioned so many direful Miseries.*

Had *Homer*, 'tis said, designed to establish this Truth by his Poem, it would present itself in the Fable itself, independently of its Episodes, and without any others. Now, I grant that the Moral ought to result from the Fable, independently of its Episodes: So I always thought, and I have given a short Abstract of the Plan of the Poem, for no other Reason, but to see if in reality any general Instruction arise from it; but it is by no Means necessary, that thro' the whole Course of the Poem, no other View should ever appear. *Father Bossu* has not pretended that; far from it, he discovers in the *Iliad* a vast Number of particular Lessons.

I shall not therefore dispute against any of the Moral Lessons that have been, or shall yet be found in the *Iliad*: It is enough for me, if there results one from the whole Action; and that all the rest have only their Foundation in certain Circumstances of the Action.

For Instance, I agree, that the Grief of *Achilles* for the Death of *Patroclus* is a fine Picture of Friendship: But who does not see that this Death and Grief have only been imagined by *Homer*, for the unravelling of his Fable? Nothing is more natural than that a Hero, such as *Patroclus*, should be most tenderly touched by the Distresses of his Allies, and be disposed to assist them: He perishes in the Enterprize: A

young Man like *Achilles* could not fail to be transported with Anger upon losing so faithful and dear a Friend. Time, the Miseries the *Greeks* had suffered, the instant Entreaties of his Friends, had diminished his Hatred against *Agamemnon*; it ought then to yield to his Resentment of *Patroclus's* Death: Accordingly he forgets the Injury done to him, he is reconciled to the *Greeks*, and runs to avenge himself upon *Hector*. Thus *Homer* finishes his Action in the most natural and probable Way imaginable. But whatever moral Lesson one may draw from this Death of *Patroclus*, there will still be a vast Difference between such an Instruction, arising from one Part of the Action only, and a Truth which makes itself felt throughout the whole Poem, the whole Course of the Action.

This may serve for an Answer to what is said of the different Morals the *Iliad* points out: For either they are the same at Bottom with those we have taken Notice of, or they cannot be regarded as general Views, since they neither commence, continue, nor conclude with the Poem, and do not result from the whole Body, or the *tout Ensemble* of the Fable.

Were not this Discourse already too long, I would not omit to transcribe here what was said of the Divisions which reigned in *Greece* in *Homer's* Time: Nothing could better serve to justify what we have said of *Homer's* Design in composing the *Iliad*; for what could a Poet do that was more suitable to a People always in War, than to sing Verses to them in which the Miseries attending Discord were represented in the liveliest Colours? But could *Homer* ever hope to persuade the *Greeks* to lay down their Arms, and to live in Concord? This Poet might doubt



doubt of his Poem's having so good an Effect; for nothing is more common at all Times, than to see the most reasonable Remonstrances neglected: But in such an Uncertainty, a Writer of good Sense ought nevertheless to say to his Fellow-Citizens, whatever he thought a proper Lesson to them. In these later Ages many Writers of the first Rank, but who had not more Authority than *Homer*, and who could not flatter themselves to be better heard than he was, have dared to represent to Princes of their Time, how dangerous it was to be always engaged in War one with another.

I come now to examine the *Odyssey*; it is far from being so simple as the *Iliad*. This Fable is one of those which have a *double Constitution*, and finishes by a double *Catastrophe*, i. e. by one which is happy to the Good, and miserable to the Bad.

Here is the Plan of it in Miniature. *Ulysses* is far from his Country: During his Absence all is in the greatest Confusion; his Estate is dissipated, Snares are laid for his Wife and for his Son: He himself runs thro' a thousand Perils, from which his Wisdom rescues him: The same Prudence furnishes him with Means for his Return to Ithaca to re-establish his Affairs into good Order, and to take Vengeance on his Enemies.

We see here a double Plot: What passes in Ithaca during his Absence is one, the other is what happens to *Ulysses* while the Wrath of *Neptune* hinders his Return. These two Intrigues have each a particular Unravelling: The Death of the Pretenders finishes the first: The second is unravelled by the Return of *Ulysses*, and his Re-establishment in his own Country.

These two Plots lay a Foundation for two different Instructions: The Disorders committed by the Suitors during *Ulysses's* Absence, teach Princes *of what Consequence their Presence is to their States.* The Dangers to which *Ulysses* is exposed, from which his Prudence saves him, shew, *the Advantage of Wisdom in the most difficult Situations.*

Yet we may say, that *Homer's* general View in the *Odyssy* was, to give us in the Character of *Ulysses* an Example of consummate Prudence: For the Wisdom of this Prince appears throughout all, and gives Place to the unravelling of both the Intrigues. This seems to be *Horace's* Opinion, when he says,

*Rursus quid Virtus, quid Sapientia possit,  
Utile proposuit nobis exemplar Ulysses.*

The *Odyssy* is therefore compos'd, as well as the *Iliad*, of an Action which is one Whole: And from this Action there results one general Moral; and by consequence, the Fables of these Poems are true Apologues. I have done what I could to prove it: One will be the better convinc'd of it if he will read them with a little Attention, and without any Prepossession: For I grant that in Matters of this Sort the Questions cannot be brought to the last Point of Evidence, and that there will always remain some Difficulties.

The Author of the Memoir has undertaken to prove, in the third Place, *That no Reason obliges a Poet to subject himself to the Slavery of a Moral Rule.* In the last Discourse I had the Honour to read to this Academy, I gave the Reasons which appeared to me the most convincing, to prove, that one cannot compose an Epick Poem

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unless the Fable be allegorical and moral. I shall therefore refer you to it, and content myself with concluding now, by answering to the two principal Difficulties objected against my Opinion.

*The Epopée, it is said, is a harmonious Recital of great and probable Events, which by their mutual Relation and Connexion make one Whole: But neither the Idea of Harmony, nor that of Greatness, nor that of Probability, have any Relation to a Moral Truth, but simply because there is a Picture here of human Passions, as in a Piece of History; from whence it may be inferred, that a Moral is not indeed opposite to the Nature of an Epick Poem, but that by its Nature it does not require there should be one.*

This reasoning would be good, if there were no Room for objecting against the Definition given here of the *Epopée*: But besides that it is far from appearing to me to be clear, it is not accurate. If the *Epopée* were no more but a Recital of Events at once great and probable, not only would the *Pharsalia* of *Lucan*, and any other such Poems be truly Epick; but this Appellation would agree to the most irregular Poems, as *L'Italia liberata*; nay, even to the *Orlando furioso*. Which is more, one might choose out of *Herodot*, or any other Historian one pleases, great and probable Events, connect them, and make a harmonious Recital of them, and this would be an Epick Poem. This was not *Aristotle's* Sentiment, nor the Opinion of any of the ancient Criticks: I even believe it impossible to find any where else such a Definition of the *Epopée*; and since it hath neither been explained nor proved, I think we may very well refuse to admit the Consequences drawn from it.



It is objected in the second Place, *That it would be to put Fetters upon Poets, to oblige them to establish some Moral Truth by their Poems.* But the Slavery which Rules subject Poets to, are no Argument against them. What Rule does not embarrass, and may not sometimes damp the Poetick Fury? But a good Poet never complains of these Difficulties: They only serve to display the Force of his Genius, and to enhance his Glory. *Homer* and *Virgil* have found Means to compose admirable Poems by conforming to this Rule: It is therefore not impossible to succeed by submitting to it. It would not be an Epick Poem, if there was no Allegory, if Allegory be essential to Epick Poetry; and that it is, I have made appear in my first Dissertation.

I have many things to add here. I could have wished, for Instance, to have joined *Virgil* with *Homer*, and to have shewn, that the *Æneid* is no less an Imitation of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, in what relates to the Fable, than in every other Respect: And this it would not be difficult to prove. I might have discoursed of other Poems in which the Moral Rule is not observed, and have applied to Tragedy and Comedy the same Principles I have established with Relation to the *Epopée*, and have proved, that the best Antiquity had never carried their Esteem for Poets, and for *Homer* above all the rest, so far, had it not been that they thought the principal End of their Compositions was to inspire Virtue, and that they always disguised some moral Truth under the Veil of their Fables. But these Discussions would have led me into too long a Discourse, and I thought it only necessary to fol-

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low the Author of the Memoir, and to answer him (I).

(I) These Discourses are very curious and entertaining. But a masterly *English* Critick points out the true Nature of Poetry, of the Epick in particular, and the principal Excellence of *Homer*, in a very few Words, which are the best Exposition of *Aristotle's* Meaning. (*Characteristicks*, T. 1. Advice to an Author, p. 196.

Poetry itself was defined an Imitation, chiefly of Men and Manners; and was that in an exalted and noble Degree, which in a low one we call Mimickry (*Aristotle de Poet.* cap. 4.) 'Tis in this that this great Mimographer, the Father and Prince of Poets excells so highly; his Characters being wrought to Likeness beyond what any succeeding Masters were ever able to describe. Nor are his Works, which are so full of Action, any other than an artful Series or Chain of Dialogues, which turn upon one Catastrophe or Event. He describes no Qualities or Virtues; censures no Manners, makes no Encomiums, nor gives Characters himself, but brings his Actors still in View: 'Tis they who shew themselves; 'tis they who speak in such a Manner, as distinguishes them in all Things from all others, and makes themselves. Their different Allays and Compositions so justly made, and equally carry'd on thro' every Particle of the Action, give more Instruction than all the Comments or Glosses in the World, &c. This he proves by a few admirable Observations on the Truth of the chief Characters in the *Iliad*, in Answer to this curious Question, hardly touched by any other Critick, *How comes the Poet to draw no perfect Character in either of his Pieces?* T. 3. p. 160.

He observes in the Place quoted above, there was no more left for Tragedy to do after him (*Homer*), than to erect a Stage, and draw his Dialogues and Characters into Scenes; turning in the same Manner upon one principal Action or Event, with that Regard to Place and Time which was suitable to a real Spectacle. Even Comedy itself was adjudged to this great Master, it being derived from those *Parodies*, or mock Humours, of which he had given the Specimen in a concealed Sort of Raillery, intermixed with the Sublime, (not only in his *Margites*, but even in his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.) See his admirable Comments upon what *Aristotle* says of Unity, Beauty, and Greatness, *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*, p. 193.

He gives us this Account of the moral Nature of Tragedy, *Advice*, &c. p. 218. The high Spirit of Tragedy can ill subsist where the Spirit of Liberty is wanting. The Genius of

of this Poetry consists in the lively Representation of the Disorders and Misery of the Great, to the End that the People, and those of a lower Condition, may be taught the better to content themselves with Privacy, enjoy their safer State, and prize the Equality and Justice of their Guardian Laws. And again, p. 317. What Person of any Genius, or masterly Command in the poetick Art, could think of bringing the *Epick* or *Tragick* Muse to act the Pander, or to be subservient to Effeminacy and Cowardice? 'Tis not against Death, Hazards, or Toils, that Tragedy and the heroick Fable are pointed. 'Tis not mere Life which is here exalted, or has its Price enhanc'd. On the contrary, its Calamities are expos'd; the Disorders of the Passions set to View; Fortitude recommended; Honour advanc'd; the Contempt of Death plac'd as the peculiar Note of every generous and happy Soul, and the tenacious Love of Life, as the truest Character of an abject Wretch.

Now this is the very Idea several ancient Criticks give us of the End of Poetry in general, and of the *Epick* and *Dramatick* in particular. This is what *Marcus Antoninus* represents as the End and Use of Tragedy, to bring the Passions into good Order. And if I may be allow'd to offer a Conjecture about what hath so much embarrassed *Aristotle's* Commentators, and divided them into so many different Opinions about what he calls *purging our Passions*, *purging* our Fear and Pity, which he says is the Design of Tragedy; I think it means that Poetry, *i. e.* Imitation of Men and Manners in general, and Tragedy in particular, have not so properly their good Effect upon the Mind, or upon the Passions and our Temper, in the *Didactic* as in the *Ascetic* Way; *i. e.* They are designed not merely to teach or prove a Moral Lesson, but to work the Mind gradually into a good, a wholesome Disposition, and to leave it in that Temper. This Exercise purges, refines or purifies the Mind, as Regimen does the Body. It excites a laudable Disposition; and a good Disposition, by being often excited, will become Temper or Habitual.

But let it be observed, that whatever Action is so imitated as to have this Effect, will, when considered in the *Theoretick* Way, be found to prove a certain Moral Truth, corresponding to the Disposition of Mind it is qualified to excite, or bring forth into Exercise. It will be a Representation that will shew some natural good Effects of some laudable Affection, or some natural bad Consequences of some vicious one. It will thus prove some Moral Truth, or be an Experiment of its Truth. Now if the Action be one, the good *Ascetic* Effect ultimately produced will be one; but before it be

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produc'd, the Mind will suffer various Emotions, all tending towards this main Moral Effect. And in like Manner, if the Action be one, there will be one main Moral Truth resulting from the Whole; but then every Step towards the compleat Proof of this Moral Truth will suggest and prove, at least in part, some Moral Truth, which will then compound with the ultimate one aimed at by the Whole, and resulting from it; have the same Relation to it in the *Theoretick* Way, that the Sentiment, Feeling, or Passion, excited by every part in the progressive Action, has to the Passion or Disposition, in producing and leaving which on the Mind, the Action will finish in the *Ascetick* Way. Were this the Place to enlarge on this Head, I could bring several good Authorities from the Ancients for considering imitative Poetry in this double Light; and for the necessary Connexion in the Nature of Things, between these two different Effects of a good Poem, a good Tragedy in particular.



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**A DISCOURSE** *upon the Manner*  
*in which VIRGIL has imitated*  
**HOMER.**

By Mr. L'Abbe FRAQUIER.\*

**I** Don't propose to draw the Characters of *Homer* and *Virgil*. I do not intend so much as to compare them. *Julius Scaliger* and many since him have heartily laboured this Subject; and it would be a vain and tiresome Undertaking, only to repeat what other Treatises are so full of. All I designed, was to make a few Remarks for my own private Instruction, in order to learn how great Models ought to be imitated. And in this View I set myself to consider how *Virgil* in his *Æneid* hath imitated *Homer*, and to examine the richest and noblest Parts of these two sublime Poems in this new Light. I am apt to think the Fruits of this Research may not be altogether useless; and tho' they should be of very little Use to Persons of such Judgment

\* Memoirs, &c. Tom. 2.

Judgment and Learning as the Members of this Academy, yet it will not be disagreeable to them, to have the most pleasing and grand Images Poetry hath ever been able to invent, recalled to their Minds.

When the polite Arts first appeared in *Italy*, no more was thought of but transplanting into the *Latin* Tongue whatever was most admired in the *Greek*: So that this first Age of good Taste and Literature produced nothing but Copies, which as beautiful as they are, yet stinted and confined the Poet to the Genius and Thoughts of the Original. Thus in the Infancy of natural Life, till the Mind is strengthened by Study and Education, and arrived to full Vigour and Maturity, a Child without Science and Art only imitates what strikes his Eyes most strongly. Every one in this Childhood of Learning thought he had acquired sufficient Glory, if he had faithfully rendered into *Latin* some Piece of a *Greek* Poet. For, as *Horace* tells us, it was not till *Rome* had some Respite after the *Punick* Wars, that she began to look into *Sophocles*, *Thespis*, and *Æschylus*, and to consider what might be learned from them.

*Et post Punica bella quietus, querere cæpit,  
Quid Sophocles, & Thespis, & Æschylus utile  
ferrent.*

Such Labours enriched the *Roman* Language, and formed just Ideas of true Poetry. *Terence*, who came afterwards, did not keep within the narrow Limits his Predecessors had not surpassed. He observed the extreme Simplicity of the *Greek* Comedies, and not imagining that so great a Simplicity could have Success in a Language,  
which,



which, as *Quintilian* remarks, had neither the Purity nor the Sweetness of the *Greek*; he adventured to mix two Comedies to make one, and by this Means to give more Life and Action to his Comedies. Tho' Satire be totally of *Roman* Invention, according to *Quintilian*, and *Lucilius* thus introduced a new Kind of Composition; yet *Horace* informs us, that the Satires of *Lucilius* were very near a-kin to the ancient *Greek* Comedies, in which Poetry had a Liberty allowed it of attacking Irregularities in Life, and vicious Characters, that at last degenerated into a Licentiousness, which the Magistrates found themselves obliged to restrain. *In vitium libertas excedit, & vim dignam lege regi.* We cannot call what I have said of *Lucilius* into doubt, if we recollect what *Horace* says,

*Eupolis atque Cratinus, Aristophanesque Poetae,  
Atque alii quorum Comædia prisca virorum est,  
Si quis erat dignus describi, quod malus, aut fur,  
Quod mæchus foret, aut sicarius, aut alioqui  
Famosus: multa cum libertate nitabant.  
Hinc omnis pendet Lucilius, hosce secutus,  
Mutatis tantum numeris, pedibusque facetus.*

But we are not here speaking of those Kinds of Compositions which *Horace* refuses to call Poems.

————— *neque si quis scribat, uti nos,  
Sermoni propiora, putes hunc esse poetam.*

Nor of some Pieces for the Theatre, which, as the same Author tells us, were originally of *Roman* Growth.

————— *Vestigia*

— — — — — *Vestigia Græca*  
*Ausi differere, & celebrare domestica facta,*  
*Vel qui prætextas, vel qui docuere togatas.*

Which do not belong to Poetry :

*Idcirca quidam comædia, necne poema*  
*Esset, quæsiwere.*

We are now to speak of the highest Poetry, or  
 Language of the Gods.

*Ingenium cui sit, cui mens divinior, atque os*  
*Magna sonaturum, des nominis hujus honorem.*

*Virgil* rescued the *Latin* Poetry from servile Imitation; and to judge of his Views by his Poems, there is reason to think that he proposed nothing less than to dispute with *Greece* the Glory of an Epick Poem, and to revive in his *Æneid* the Ashes of *Troy*, and triumph over its Conquerors. His Design was grand and magnificent. His Intention was to sing the Rise of a People then glorious by their Conquest of the World, that was equally noble by their Origin. He traces back to the most distant Ages, and to the Blood of the Gods the Founders of *Rome*, and the Parents of a Family that was to give Masters to the Universe: For according to all Appearances, so many Predictions made in the *Æneid* to the Ancestors of *Julius Cæsar*, concerning the universal Empire destined to him, and the Happiness of the People who should live under his Sovereign Rule, and that of *Augustus*, were chiefly intended to reconcile the free Spirits

of

of the *Romans* to a Domination which they at first regarded with Horror. *Virgil* thought; that a Poem composed upon this new Plan; would do more Honour to *Augustus* than the first Work he had thought of executing after his *Georgicks*.

*Mox tamen ardentem accingar dicere pagnas Caesaris.*

A direct Panegyrick would not have cost the Poet so much Labour, and would not have done so great Honour to his Hero.

I imagine that *Virgil*, full of these Thoughts; considered the *Iliad* of *Homer* as a Poem filled with Action; with Battels; and all that Ministry of the Gods which the Marvellous in the higher Poetry requires.

*Ambages Deorumque ministeria*—

And the *Odyssey*, on the contrary, replenished with Beauties of a different Kind, presented him with a Series of Travels and Recitals. He saw, that being to bring the Heroes of his Poem from the Banks of *Scamander*; he should have Occasion to imitate the *Odyssey*: And that being obliged to make them to fight for their Settlement in *Italy*, he should want the *Iliad* for ever before his Eyes; and besides, he well knew; that in an Epick Poem the Gods must act the principal Part. A hundred Years before *Virgil*; the *Romans* would have been satisfied with translating the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into their Tongue; as had been really done. Nature, which carries nothing at first to its full Perfection; had not as yet produced among them a Genius capable of becoming an Original by imitating: Such a Present



sent from Heaven was not due to the *Romans*, till having gradually improved their Genius, they had found, in the Age of *Augustus*, a Season favourable for the Arts, and capable of discerning their Worth.

*Aeneas* voyages like *Ulysses*, and fights like *Achilles*. But the Courage of *Achilles* inclined not a little towards Ferocity, and the Prudence of *Ulysses* towards Cunning. *Virgil* has neither copied the one nor the other of these Characters. He has formed a Third entirely new, in which Valour and Art are tempered by genuine Piety, and an uninterrupted Attention to the Will of the Gods: *Sum pius Aeneas*. What History and Tradition furnished to *Virgil*, would have been nothing in the Hands of another Poet. But his equally rich and correct Imagination, his sublime natural Genius, supported by his thorough Acquaintance with all the Beauties of *Homer*, out of this Nothing have produced a Poem, which hath been for many Ages the Admiration of all who are capable of putting a due Value upon the Works of Genius. For what is the whole Matter at Bottom? *Aeneas*, after the Burning of *Troy*, sets sail with a small Remainder of his Compatriots: He arrives in *Italy*; he fights his Way; he founds a State there, or rather a Colony. In all this, he is like many others, who on parallel Occasions have founded Cities, and made Settlements far from their native Country, but, for want of a Poet to eternalize them, are now hardly known: As for Instance, the People chased out of *Phœnicia* by *Joshua*, who flying before the Arms of God, spread the Ruins of their Country through almost all the Nations of the World: Or, not to go beyond the *Aeneid*.

Antenor, from the midst of Grecian Hosts  
 Could pass secure, and pierce th' Illyrian Coasts:  
 Where rowling down the Steep, Timavus raves,  
 And thro' nine Channels disembogues his Waves.  
 At length he founded Padua's happy Seat,  
 And gave his Trojans a secure Retreat.

I shall not enter here into a long Detail of the Manner in which *Virgil* hath treated his Subject, to shew how he hath comprized the forty-eight Books of *Homer* in the twelve of the *Æneid*. These twelve make a compleat Whole, tho' some Wits would add a thirteenth; undoubtedly because they had not given sufficient Attention to the Constitution of the Work, and the general Plan of the Poet. In the first six we find almost the whole of the *Odyssey*; as we do the whole of the *Iliad* in the six last. And we may reasonably presume, that if *Virgil* had had Leisure to put the finishing Hand to his Poem, having so noble an Original to imitate, the six last, which are not so finish'd as the others, would have had more Life and Force, more Grandeur and Majesty; and the *Iliad* would have preserved in the *Æneid*, all the Advantage it may perhaps have of the *Odyssey*.

A full Examination of the *Æneid* would carry us too far; it will be enough to take some Passages from it, and set them over against those in *Homer*, of which they are Imitations. *Juno*, in the *Iliad*, shews an implacable Hatred against the *Trojans*: She employs both open Force and secret Art to work their Ruin. Her Wrath, which is not far from Rage and Fury, did not take its Rise from the Violation of the Marriage Laws by the Rape of *Helen*; Laws held sacred and

and respectable in all Nations, and of which she, as the Wife of *Jupiter*, had a particular Guardianship and Charge.

*Junoni ante alias, cui vincla jugalia curæ.*

For *Juno* ties the nuptial Knot, and makes the  
[Marriage Joys.

But what solely provokes her, is the Affront put upon her by the Judgment of *Paris*, and that unpardonable Contempt of her Beauty, the Rape of young *Ganymede*.

Deep graven in her Heart the Doom remain'd  
Of partial *Paris*, and her Son disdain'd:  
The Grace bestow'd on ravish'd *Ganymede*,  
*Electra's* Glories, and her injur'd Bed.  
Each was a Cause alone, and all combin'd  
To kindle Vengeance in her haughty Mind.

We see a plain Proof of this in the fourth Book of the *Iliad*. For there the *Trojans* and *Greeks* having permitted *Paris* and *Menelaus* to put an End to their Quarrel and the War by a single Combat, on condition, that if *Menelaus* conquer'd, *Helen* should be restor'd to him, and the *Greeks* retire without doing any more Mischief to *Troy*; but that if Fortune favoured *Paris*, the War should end that Moment, and *Helen* be the Reward of his Victory in this decisive Combat. *Menelaus* had the Advantage, and *Jupiter* proposes in the Council of the Gods, that the Conditions agreed to by these Nations should be observed. *Juno*, no doubt, would have consented to this, if she had had nothing in her View but the Rights of Marriage; for it



was but, after all, rendering to *Menelaus* what the Laws had given him. The *Trojans* had been sufficiently punished by the Miseries of a War that had lasted ten Years: Besides, it was but to perform Oaths made before the sacred Altars, with all the Sacrifices Religion prescribed: But *Juno* being angry with the Nation itself, she takes all Methods to hinder an Action, which was in so many different respects just. She brings Matters so about, that the *Trojans* are the first who violate the solemn Treaty, and by so doing rekindle the War, an End to which would have saved them; and this put Things beyond all Possibility of an Accommodation. *Virgil* hath made use of this Hatred of *Juno*, confirmed by the *Iliad*. He makes this Goddess throw Obstacles in the Way of all *Æneas's* Enterprizes: She opposes him in every thing, because he is a *Trojan*, and the Son of *Venus*, her Enemy and Rival: She applies to *Eolus* to sink his Fleet: She endeavours to detain him at *Carthage* to disappoint his Scheme, and seems disposed to forget her Resentment against *Venus*, provided she could by that Reconciliation obstruct the Founding of *Rome*: she destroys a Part of his Fleet in *Sicily*; but when she sees him arrived in *Italy*, and finds Heaven propitious to *Æneas*, and inexorable to her, tho' a Goddess, and the Sister and Wife of *Jupiter*, she has Recourse to the Infernal Powers, and stirs up *Alecto* to spread Discord every where, and inspire Rage into the Breast of *Turnus*.

*If Jove and Heav'n my just Desires deny,  
Hell shall the Pow'r of Heav'n and Jove supply.*

What

What does she not afterwards say in the Assembly of the Gods, which opens the Tenth Book of the *Æneid*, when the Destiny declares itself, and the Death of *Turnus* is determined? What Submissions and Prayers does she not make to *Jupiter*, to efface at least the Name, if she could not extirpate the Race?

*But let the Latins still retain their Name :  
Speak the same Language which they spoke before ;  
Wear the same Habits which their Grandfires*  
[wore :

*Call them not Trojans : Perish the Renown  
And Name of Troy, with that detested Town.  
Latium be Latium still : Let Alba reign,  
And Rome's immortal Majesty remain.*

The *Juno* of the *Æneid* is formed upon the *Juno* of the *Iliad*. This is visible. But see what *Virgil* in imitating has added of his own. *Juno*, besides her Hatred against the *Trojans*, excited by the Causes we have mentioned, appears particularly animated against *Æneas*, for special Reasons, which render her Character proper to the *Æneid*; and which raises *Virgil* far above the Rank of those servile Copiers, who can only follow their Author Step by Step: *Juno* knew, says he, that the *Roman* Power was to become fatal to *Carthage*, her favourite City, which she would gladly have made Mistress of the World. This makes a new Incentive to her against a People she had already so many other Reasons to hate; and this gives *Virgil* an Opportunity of exalting the Glory of his Country, by recalling into the Minds of his Readers the greatest Events to be found in History.

For what could be more glorious to a Nation than to see it extend its Empire to such a Height of Grandeur, in Opposition to all the Efforts of *Juno*?

*Such Time, such Toil requir'd the Roman Name,  
Such Length of Labour for so vast a Frame.*

This is the Secret of enriching and greatening a Work. And what other Genius would have made such a proper Use of the Ruin of a flourishing Republick, which was the only one in the World capable of making head against *Rome*, or to balance her Power, could any thing have balanc'd it? *Virgil*, in his Character of *Juno*, has not merely copied the *Juno* of the *Iliad*, he had likewise that of *Neptune* in the *Odyssey* in his Eye, who was stirred up by the Provocation he had received from *Ulysses*, in the Person of his Son, against this unfortunate Prince. Of these two Divinities he makes one, whose Wrath gives a very considerable Relief to his Hero, by the Persecutions it occasions to him. The Offers *Juno* makes to *Eolus*, are almost the same she makes to the God of Sleep in the *Iliad*: The Tempest rais'd by the God of the Winds is copied from that in the *Odyssey*. 'Tis thus that the Intelligent find with Pleasure in the Pictures of the great Masters, what they have elsewhere beheld with such Admiration: Here an *Apollo*, and there the Gladiator, and so many other precious Remains of Antiquity.

*Aeneas's* Arrival at *Carthage* after the Storm, is not an Imitation of one single Passage in *Homer*. *Virgil* has here mixed together the Arrival of *Ulysses* at the Palace of *Alcinous*, and his meeting with the Nymph *Calypso*. His rencontre with



with *Venus* near *Carthage*, puts us in Mind of *Ulysses* when he finds *Nausicaë* on the Sea Shore. *Aeneas* recounts to *Dido* all the Miseries of *Troy*, and all his own particular Misfortunes, as *Ulysses* does his Adventures to *Alcinous*: But the Recital of *Aeneas* is so fine and so necessarily connected with the *Iliad*, that by, as it were, continuing that Poem, *Virgil* seems to have set himself to equal it, not to say more.

The Love with which *Dido* is seized to *Aeneas*, and that of *Calypso* to *Ulysses*, are at Bottom much the same Thing; as are also the Order *Jupiter* sends to *Aeneas* to leave *Carthage*, and that sent to *Ulysses* to leave *Calypso*: But whoever takes the Trouble to compare these Passages together exactly, will find what may be expected from a great Genius, when he comes after one of the same Character; all the Difference there necessarily is between an Inventor and one who improves upon an Invention. In fact, *Calypso* is enamour'd of *Ulysses*. She loves him passionately; for tho' immortal, yet she is not Proof against the Passions of Mortals: She gives way to her Inclination, and does not even observe the Laws of Modesty. *Dido's* Love to *Aeneas* is quite otherwise managed. 'Tis Love himself, it is *Cupid*, who at the Desire of his Mother *Venus*, assumes the Form of *Ascanius*, in order to deceive *Dido* more easily. Two Divinities are employed to efface out of her Mind the Memory of her first Spouse, and to blow up afresh the Sentiments in her Heart, which she thought she had buried in the Grave of *Sichæus*.

*High Praises, endless Honours you have won,  
And mighty Trophies with your worthy Son:  
Two Gods a silly Woman have undone.*

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*Ulysses,*

*Ulysses*, by the Order of the Gods, abandon<sup>s</sup> *Calypso*. She pines with Regret, she addresses her Complaints to Heaven; but all her Complaining and her Grief is but for the Loss of a Man, and being deprived of her Pleasure. The Character *Homer* gives to *Calypso*, by becoming so easily enamour'd of *Ulysses*, gives his Hero no personal Pre-eminence over *Æneas*. *Dido's* Complaints are in another Strain; she deplores her stained Glory, her having sullied that Reputation which had formerly exalted her Name to Heaven.

*For you alone I suffer in my Fame,  
Bereft of Honour, and expos'd to Shame.*

She thinks of the Contempt with which neighbouring Princes must look upon her, having so often despised them. The Image of *Sichæus*, that moving, tender Image is ever present to her Mind, and in the miserable Condition she is now in, she has nothing left to desire but Death.

*Quin morere, ut merita es.*

She dies, and the Recital of her Death presents us with such natural Beauties and touching Images, that we must have Recourse to the most pathetick among the *Greek* Tragedies, to find any thing to be compar'd with the End of the fourth Book of the *Æneid*. What Art, what Dexterity is there, in making out by the Rage of *Dido*, the Source of the implacable Hatred between the *Carthaginians* and *Romans*?

*Rise some Avenger of our Libyan Blood,  
With Fire and Sword pursue the perjurd Brood;  
Our*

*Our Arms, our Seas, our Shores oppos'd to theirs,  
And the same Hate descend on all our Heirs.*

The Games described by *Virgil* in the fifth Book of his *Æneid*, are nothing but the Games described in the twenty-third of the *Iliad*; it must be acknowledged that they are better introduced in the *Iliad*, and it is more suitable for *Achilles* to render the last Honours to *Patroclus*, than for *Æneas* in the Course of his Voyage, and who is in *Sicily* but by Chance, and for a very little Time, to make so great an Apparatus for the Anniversary of *Anchises*. But *Virgil* in the Detail of his Games hath contrived a Variety which is exceeding agreeable: For in the first Place, the Ship-race is wholly his own; and he may perhaps have got the Idea of it from the *Panemachia* amongst the *Romans*: We owe to him likewise the Incident of *Nisus's* giving the Advantage to *Euryalus*, that interests us in Favour of them both, and prepares us for the Representation the Poet gives of them in the ninth Book, where their mutual Friendship costs them both their Lives. The Adventure of *Antilochus* and *Menelaus* in *Homer*, may have given *Virgil* the Hint of diversifying his Poem by this Incident; but it did not furnish him with the Matter by which he hath contrived to make it so deeply interesting. The Combat between *Dares* and *Entillus* is a Passage managed with great Skill: For there we have the Pleasure of seeing the Arrogance of a robust Youth humbled by an old infirm Man, rous'd by his Courage to engage in an unequal Combat. Whereas in the Passage of the *Iliad* corresponding to this, the younger and stronger of the two Combatants defeats the other, which being nothing extraordinary



traordinary, contributes nothing to the Pleasure of the Spectators, nor to the Marvellous in the Poem. Therefore *Virgil* forsook the *Iliad* in this Point, to go to the *Odyſſey*, and transplant from it the Combat of *Ulyſſes* with *Irus* into his Games. We obſerve likewise, with another Kind of Satisfaction, what *Virgil* has added from his own Imagination to flatter his Country; that Train of young Men, which *Æneas* carried with him into *Italy*, whom the Poet preſents as the Founders of the principal Families in *Rome*: He traces back to them the Origin of an Exerciſe in uſe among the *Roman* Nobility, which they called the *Trojan* Play.

————— the Latin Sires impart  
 To their ſucceeding Sons the graceful Art.  
 From theſe imperial Rome receiv'd the Game.

It is eaſy to find out whence *Æneas's* Deſcent into Hell is taken. *Ulyſſes* in the *Odyſſey* goes to conſult the Gholt of *Tireſias*: In the *Æneid* the Hero goes to conſult his Father's Shade. *Ulyſſes* ſees the Souls of his celebrated Anceſtors paſs before him, or of thoſe he had known at the Siege of *Troy*: Among others he ſees *Ajax*, with whom he had the famous Diſpute about the Arms of *Achilles*, and *Ajax* keeps a ſtern Silence, that ſhew'd Haughtineſs and Pride. *Tireſias* ſays very little to *Ulyſſes*, and makes his Answer in a very obſcure enigmatical Manner. In the *Æneid*, all the Circumſtances of the Deſcent are grand, whereas in the Paſſage of the *Odyſſey*, whence the Idea was taken, nothing is very noble. It is much the ſame thing with *Horace's*

race's Description of the nocturnal Ceremonies performed by two Magicians.

——— *Scalpere terram*

*Unguibus, & pullam divellere mordicus agnam  
Cæperunt. Cruor in fossam confusus, ut inde  
Manes elicerent animos responsa daturus.*

We may say that *Virgil* has profited more by the Frogs of *Aristophanes*, than by the Hell of the *Odyssey*.

*Æneas* meets *Dido* in the Shades, and she is obstinately silent, which Silence in a despised Woman, who died of Despair, has, methinks, something more consistent and touching in it, than in a Hero, upon whom Grief ought not to make so deep an Impression; and who ought, at least after Death, to have forgot all the Weaknesses of this Life: Whereas the Provocation of *Dido* is of the Nature of those Vexations, which according to the Poets do not quit us even after Death.

*Cura non ipsa in morte relinquunt.*

*Telemachus*, when he arrives in the Territories of King *Nestor*, finds him employ'd about a solemn Sacrifice. We find this Sacrifice again in the Description of *Evander*, when *Æneas* goes up the *Tiber* to demand his Succour.

The Buckler of *Æneas* is a Copy of that of *Achilles*: But both in the Description of the Buckler, and in the Interview of *Æneas* with his Father, *Virgil*, always attentive to the Glory of his Country, takes occasion to find a place by Anticipation, for the most memorable Events in the Roman History from *Æneas* to *Augustus*.  
Whereas

Whereas nothing is represented on the Shield of *Achilles* but indifferent Subjects; and *Ulysses* sees nothing in the Shades below but Heroes he had known, which is less entertaining to Curiosity, than future Events. And it is in these Passages, it must be acknowledged, that the *Latin* Poet has imitated the *Grecian*; as the great Painters and Sculptors imitate Nature; I mean, with an Intention to embellish or surpass it.

The Enumeration *Homer* makes of the *Grecian* Ships, or of the Troops which came to assist the *Trojans*, is one of the richest and most celebrated Passages in the *Iliad*. *Virgil* has followed it in his Manner, in describing the People who joined *Aeneas*, or those who espoused the Interest of *Turnus*. All is equally diversified by both, as well with regard to Geography and ancient History, as to the most singular Customs of every Country: And perhaps *Virgil*, by dividing his Enumeration, has not a little improved upon *Homer*, who by the Contexture of his Work was obliged to give his all at once; which has made his Commentators call that Part of his Poem, *A Catalogue*.

The Combat of *Aeneas* with *Turnus*, is taken from three different Combats in the *Iliad*, viz. That of *Paris* and *Menelaus* in the third Book; that of *Hector* and *Ajax* in the seventh; and that of *Achilles* and *Hector* in the twenty-second. *Minerva* in the fifth Book opens the Eyes of *Diomedes*, and dissipates the Cloud which hinders the feeble Sight of Mortals from distinguishing the Gods. She does it that he might discern *Venus* and *Mars*. *Venus* enlightens *Aeneas* in the same Manner, but upon a more important Occasion, and to discover to him a terrible Object, which is perhaps the most strongly painted Image



Image in the whole *Æneid*. For by the Existence of this new Light he clearly sees the Gods who were Enemies to *Troy*, busied with all their Might totally to destroy it.

*I look'd, I listen'd ; dreadful Sounds I bear ;  
And the dire Forms of Hostile Gods appear.  
Where yon disorder'd Heap of Ruin lies,  
Stones rent from Stones, where Clouds of Dust  
arise,*

*Amid that Smother Jup'ter holds his Place :  
Below the Wall's Foundation drives his Mace :  
And heaves the Building from the solid Base. }  
Look where in Arms Imperial Juno stands,  
Full in the Scæan Gate, with loud Commands, }  
Urging on Shore the hardy Grecian Bands. }  
See Pallas, of her Snaky Buckler proud,  
Bestrides the Tow'r, refulgent thro' the Cloud :  
See Jove, new Courage to the Foe supplies,  
And arms against the Town the partial Deities.*

The Council of the Gods, in the tenth Book of the *Æneid* ; the Discourse between *Jupiter* and *Venus* in the first, and that between *Jupiter* and *Juno* in the twelfth, are but Copies, but beautiful Copies of what we read a hundred Times in *Homer*. The Presents *Helen* in the *Odyssey* makes to *Telemachus*, have furnished *Virgil* with the Ideas of those *Andromache* gives to *Astyanax* in the *Æneid*. The different Manners of fighting and falling dead or wounded, all this Detail, which is so proper a Subject for Painting, is almost all taken from the *Greek*. We must say the same of almost all the Comparisons, which are more frequent in this than any other Subject : But they return in *Virgil* adapted with so much Art, and adorned with such a delicate and  
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elegant Choice of Words, that one cannot sometimes hinder himself from owning, that amidst the vast Riches with which *Homer's* Poems abound, *Virgil* has been happy to have had no more to do but choose and place well: *Homer* seems to have scattered them with a full Hand at adventure; and some Criticks have thought, that they have a greater Resemblance one to another, than to the Things they were brought to illustrate: But this never happened to the *Latin* Poet; insomuch that it is necessary on these Occasions to call to mind that *Homer* was the Inventor, if we would give him any Preference above *Virgil* in this Respect. Were I not speaking to Gentlemen thoroughly acquainted with *Homer* and *Virgil*, I would enlarge upon this Article: But it is sufficient to my present Purpose, which is to paint out the most perfect Manner of Imitation, not to have overlooked it.

In the eighth Book of the *Iliad* there is a Situation of Affairs which makes as it were the Embroil of the whole Poem; and is therefore compar'd by the Criticks, with good Reason, to a Tragedy. *Jupiter* having resolved to make the *Greeks* feel the Importance to them of *Achilles's* Valour, and thus to avenge the Affront put upon him by *Agamemnon*, gives for some time all the Advantage to the *Trojan* Troops; so that they are driven out of the Plain, and scarcely thinking themselves safe within their Entrenchments, pass the Night in great Trouble and cruel Disquietude. They are forced by the desperate State of their Affairs, to take a very wise Resolution to send Deputies to *Achilles*, and to make him, on the Part of *Agamemnon*, the most honourable Terms he could hope for. This

was

was the Pinch to which *Jupiter* had resolved to reduce the *Greeks*, and the Accomplishment of his Promise to *Thetis*, in the first Book of the *Iliad*. On the other hand the *Trojans*, Masters of the Field, and filled with Assurance and Boldness, had lighted Fires every where, and only wait the Morning to fall afresh upon the *Greeks*, to drive them into their Vessels, and force them to reembark in great Disorder. Nothing can be more beautiful or better painted than the Confusion of the one, and the Confidence of the other: *Homer* seems to have exerted all the Strength of his Imagination to enliven this Picture. *Virgil* hath made his own of this Situation. For supposing *Aeneas*, after his Arrival in *Latium*, to have fixed his Camp, and made Works necessary to defend his Troops from the Insults of the Enemy, and even to stand a Siege, he tells us, that leaving the Command to his Generals, he embarked on the *Tiber* to go to demand in Person Succours from *Evander*; and that *Turnus*, admonished by *Juno* to take Advantage of the Departure of *Aeneas*, came to attack the *Trojans* in their Entrenchments, block'd them up on all Sides, and threatened nothing less than to destroy them all in one Night. The *Rutulans* rejoice and triumph in the full Assurance of Conquest: And the *Trojans* are, in the Absence of *Aeneas*, filled almost with as great Consternation and Fright as the *Greeks* during the Absence of *Achilles*. 'Tis then that *Nisus* and *Euryalus*, having obtained Leave, undertake to find out *Aeneas*, and make as great a Havock in the Camp of their Enemy, as *Ulysses* and *Diomedes* did among the *Trojans* in the Night we have just mentioned. The Care *Nestor* takes in the *Iliad* to instruct *Ulysses* what he ought to say



say to appease *Achilles*, thinking he could never say enough, and expressing himself by Gestures, after *Ulysses* was past the Reach of his Voice: The same Care appears in the *Ascanius* of *Virgil*, and one knows not to which of the two to give the Preference, the old Man or the Infant, both being equally filled with Regard to the common Interests: One sees it is the same Thing at Bottom, but the Difference between an old Man and an Infant makes the Reader forget he had seen any such Thing before, and renders the Imitation so much more perfect, that it requires considerable Attention to find that it is one. But the Death of *Nisus* and of *Euryalus* is an Original, and not copied from any thing: For tho' *Virgil* had certainly his Eye upon the Death of *Dolon* in the *Iliad*, he hath handled it in quite a different Manner. *Dolon* is here, with respect to the Story of *Nisus* and *Euryalus*, almost the same as *Calypso* is with regard to *Dido*. The Complaints of *Euryalus's* Mother, are those we meet with in *Homer* upon the Death of *Patroclus*, or of *Hector*.

Let us now speak of another Passage happily imitated: It is the Death of *Patroclus*, which serves in some Manner for the unravelling in the *Iliad*.

*Achilles*, touch'd at last with Compassion towards the Miseries under which the *Greeks* sunk, yields to their Entreaties, not so far as to go himself against the Enemy, but as to send his Troops with *Patroclus* at their Head, to endeavour to repulse the Enemy, and revive the drooping Courage of his Allies: And tho' he would not go himself, yet he sent out the Horror he used to occasion where-ever he appeared, by giving his Armour to *Patroclus*, for whom it had been very happy  
if

if he could have also lent him his Skill and Strength. *Patroclus* is killed by *Hector*: And then *Achilles*'s Grief rages beyond all Bounds, and to avenge his Friend, rather than to avenge his Country, he engages and makes a terrible Slaughter, closes with *Hector*, and kills him; and thus gives the finishing Blow to *Troy*.

————— *Et ademptus Hector,*  
*Tradidit fessus leviora tolli*  
————— *Pergama Graiis.*

Undoubtedly *Virgil* had *Patroclus* in View, when he joins the young *Pallas*, Son to *Evan-der*, to *Aeneas*: His Father, advanc'd in Years, intrufts him with the Command of the auxiliary Troops he furnishes, and sends him to learn the Art of War under *Aeneas*.

*The Staff of my declining Days, my Son,*  
*Shall make your good or ill Success his own:*  
*In fighting Fields, from you shall learn to dare,*  
*And serve the hard Apprenticeship of War.*

This young Prince is kill'd by *Turnus*, as *Patroclus* by *Hector*, and *Turnus* puts on his Spoils, as *Hector* did the Arms of *Patroclus*. *Aeneas*'s Courage is reinforced, and he kills *Turnus*, as *Achilles* did *Hector*. The Grief of *Achilles* in *Homer* for *Patroclus*, is much more violent than that of *Aeneas* in *Virgil* for *Pallas*. *Achilles* abandons himself to Despair, with a Weakness *Plato* could not pardon in him, and which can indeed only be excused by the strict Friendship which had united them so long. The Grief of *Aeneas* is more moderate, and better becoming a Hero. *Virgil* could not better imitate that Pas-

sage in *Homer*, which finishes the *Iliad*, than by making it serve for putting an End to his *Aeneid*. *Aeneas* has no Person in whom Friendship interests him so nearly, as Friendship did *Achilles* now in *Patroclus*. For it would have been contrary to Probability to have killed *Ascanius*, who was but an Infant; and the Hero had Concern enough in the War to animate him, without having Recourse to so penetrating a Grief, as the Loss of so dear a Child must have caused. Whereas *Achilles* having but little Interest in the War of *Troy*, as he declares to *Agamemnon* in the Beginning of the Poem, and knowing besides that he must die in it, some very strong Motive was wanting to make him forget the Provocation he had received, and the Affronts, which were the only Rewards of his toilsful Services. Here lies the Difference in the Manner of imitating, or of treating the same Subject; but *Virgil* finding it admirable in *Homer*, endeavoured to come as near it as the Nature of his Work permitted him. The Character of *Pallas* is so gracious and noble, that one cannot refuse him a few Tears; and as *Pallas* is younger than *Aeneas*, there is something more touching in his Fate, than in that of *Patroclus*, who was older than *Achilles*.

Again, we may remark, that if the *Trojan* War was made for *Helen*, that of *Aeneas* was occasioned on account of *Lavinia*, whom *Aeneas* seems to carry off from *Turnus*, to whom she was given by an universal Wish; or, *Turnus* from *Aeneas*, to whom the Destinies by their Oracles had promised her. The King *Latinus* in the *Aeneid*, is the *Priam* of the *Iliad*. The Weakness of *Priam* hinders him from rendering up *Helen*, the Source of all the Miseries of *Troy*: The Weakness of *Latinus* hinders him from



from obeying the Orders of the Gods in giving *Lavinia* to the *Trojan* Prince, for whom Heaven had destined her. In fine, the more one studies *Homer* and *Virgil*, the more Beauties doth he find in the former, which the other hath borrowed. One sees there the first Lines or Sketches of every thing that is most perfect in *Virgil*, whether with respect to his general Plan, or to the Disposition of particular Parts in regard to the Whole, or in the Execution.

What is most particular is the *Sinon*, the *Laocoon*, and the *Camilla*; and that whole Philosophy, which is one of the greatest Ornaments of the sixth Book. *Sinon's* Harangue is of a Kind quite new, and in nothing resembles those in *Homer*, because it is wholly employed in giving false Colours to a Complication of Lies, to render them specious. The *Laocoon* has served for a Model to the famous Sculptor who copied it, as *Jupiter* in *Homer* was the Original of the *Jupiter* of *Phidias*. The *Camilla* is a very singular Character. *Tasso* has transported it into his *Clarinda*, and made of it one of the greatest Beauties in his Poem. Finally, the Doctrine of *Pythagoras*, which *Virgil* adventured to put into his Poem, and has done with such Success, without being encouraged to the Attempt by any thing like it in *Homer*; all this, I say, shews that he was at the same Time a great Poet, great Orator, great Philosopher, and great Painter. *Aeneas*, who finds *Andromache* in *Epirus*, and all the tender, passionate Things he puts in her Mouth, make a very touching Passage. *Virgil* may perhaps have profited by *Penelope's* Dream in the *Odysssey*, and his *Hector ubi est*, took its Origin from thence; but this Stroke is much shorter and livelier in the *Latin* than in the *Greek* Poet.

Let us return to the first Book of the *Aeneid*, to consider a Passage in it of singular Beauty. It is when *Aeneas* arrives at *Carthage*, and sees the Paintings with which the Temple of *Dido* was adorned; where he sees the Combats of the *Greeks* and *Trojans* represented, and discovers himself painted among the Chiefs. There never was any Reader, who was not struck by it. In reality, what can be imagined more moving, than to discover that others are concerned about us and our Misfortunes, and to discover this by Testimonies we come to the Knowledge of by mere Chance? Nothing can be more flattering, because nothing is less expected: And therefore we see the Moderns have not fail'd to make use of this Passage with Success. Witness the Temple erected to *Astrea*, which a Shepherdess finds in a desert Country, where none could have thought that *Astrea* ever set her Foot. But after having searched whether *Virgil* might not have borrow'd the Hint of this from *Homer*, I think I have found the first Idea of it in that Songster, who at the Court of *Alcinous* sings in the Presence of *Ulysses*, but without knowing him, the Actions in which he had so great a Share, and often repeats his Name: And in what happens to *Telemachus* when he is with *Menelaus*, to whom *Ulysses* is often mentioned, without their knowing he was his Son. One cannot, I think, refute that the *Latin* Poet has imitated the *Greek* with this Difference, that in the one it is a Song, and in the other it is a Picture: A Difference however, which disguises borrowing, and which, as I have already said, renders the Imitation more perfect by concealing it. In fine, *Virgil* owes his whole Poem to *Homer*; but 'tis to himself alone he owes the Correctness and Justness which reigns throughout

out all he writes, and his Manner of imitating his Original. So that if *Homer* is above *Virgil*, either in respect of Invention, or of the Truth of his Painting, whether in Fruitfulness of Imagination, or in respect of the Advantages of the Language in which he wrote above the *Latin* Tongue; we may say on the other hand, that certain Passages in *Homer* have been to *Virgil*, what those who built the first Houses were to the Architects who came after them. And it is to the Consideration of these Passages I have confined myself in this Discourse, because my Design was not to pass a Judgment upon *Homer* and *Virgil*, far less to exalt *Virgil* above *Homer*; but to shew from some Examples in the *Roman* Poet, how we ought to imitate such great Patterns; and how one may imitate, and yet be an Original



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# CONSIDERATIONS *upon the* ÆNEID of VIRGIL.

By Mr. L'Abbe FRAQUIER.\*

**T**HERE is Reason to wonder that *Homer*, in so great a Number of Verses, should not have left one Trace, neither of his own Origin, nor of the History of his own Time. For tho' in all Probability he hath ascribed to the most distant Ages the Manners to which he was accustomed, and the Usages he daily saw; yet we cannot be certain of this, or positively assert it. He is wholly taken up with the Recital of an Event, that happened almost four hundred Years before him. The *Iliad* comprehends but a few Days: The *Odyssy* nearly the same Number: And in these two Poems, where we learn a Part of the Events that happend at *Troy*, and several Things that passed after the taking of that City, till the Return of *Ulysses* into *Ithaca*, yet we find nothing in them of all that happened from that Period to the Time in which *Homer* himself liv'd: This Poet has restricted himself to his Subject: He says nothing in his own Name: He

\* *Memoirs, &c. Tom. 2. p. 171.*

He has shewn no particular Liking to any Country in *Greece*, by which we can form any Conjecture of his interesting himself more in one than in any other. This Independence is a Consequence of the Liberty which the greater Part of the States in his Time enjoyed, whether in the *Lesser Asia*, where he wrote, or in *Greece*. For we can't imagine that it was to make court to the Princes of *Thessaly*, who might have some Connexion, that he chose him for his Hero. 'Tis not so with Regard to *Virgil*, who in his *Aeneid* plainly designed to do Honour to himself, by doing Honour to *Italy*, and to recommend himself to *Augustus's* Favour, by flattering his Vanity. 'Tis for this Reason he has taken care to engraft into his *Aeneid* all that is most curious and beautiful in the History of *Italy*, from the most remote Ages to the Time of *Aeneas*; and had the Address to insinuate into it in the most ingenious Manner, the most remarkable Events in the *Roman* History, from the Arrival of *Aeneas* in *Italy* to the Battle of *Actium*, which secured the *Roman* Empire to *Augustus*.

All *Greece* interested itself in the Glory of *Homer*, and several Cities have disputed the Honour of the Birth of this marvellous Genius. *Virgil* has found the Secret of accommodating himself to the natural Inclinations of Mankind more than one Way. *Italy*, so fruitful of great Men, looked upon him as the greatest Poet she had ever produced: But besides this Reason of applauding himself, she could not but look upon the *Aeneid* with the same Eyes with which she beheld so many Heroes born in her Bosom; and like this Poem, as she liked her own Glory. 'Tis this perhaps that gave Rise to this Verse of *Propertius* on the Subject of the *Aeneid*.

*Nescio quid magis nascitur Iliade.*

It being very allowable to speak frequently of so great a Poet as *Virgil*, Mr. *L'Abbé Fraquier*, who had on many Occasions entertained the Academy with Remarks on his Works, (upon the Manner in which he has imitated *Homer* in particular) thought it would not be disagreeable to recall to our Minds, by the Discourse of which I am now to give a Sketch, what *Virgil* hath preserved in his *Æneid* of ancient History from the earliest known Times to *Æneas*, and what he hath inserted into it that is most remarkable in the Times from *Æneas* to the Battle of *Actium*. Herein undoubtedly lies the principal Riches of this Poem: And if in the Manner of introducing or recounting these different Events, he hath never lost Sight of *Homer*, yet he owes his Matter to his own Genius, and the Design in which he has so well succeeded of doing Honour to his Country and his Prince. So far he owes nothing to *Homer*, since *Homer* hath left no Example of it. Of all observed by Mr. *L'Abbé Fraquier* to to this Purpose, we have pitch'd upon the following Fact, which is unquestionably the most striking.

In the eighth Book of the *Æneid*, *Virgil* tells us, that *Æneas* having gone up the *Tiber* to demand Succours from *Evander*, he found the old King with his Family engaged in a solemn Sacrifice to *Hercules*, who had delivered their Country from the Depredations of a famous Scelerate. This Moment, so happily chosen for *Æneas's* Interview with *Evander*, and which lays before us so noble and splendid a Scene, is manifestly taken



ken from *Homer*; but what it produces with respect to the Knowledge of *Roman* Antiquities, is wholly *Virgil's*.

*Evander* inhabited the same Place precisely, where *Rome* was afterwards built: But these Beginnings of *Rome*, like the Commencement of every great City, were very different from the Opulence and Splendor of *Rome* in *Virgil's* Time. This Poet, who knew that Contrast gives no less Pleasure in Poetry than in Painting, saw he could not fail to please, by giving Occasion to the *Romans* to remark from what a low State their Ancestors had rais'd *Rome* to its present Grandeur and Magnificence. This Comparison, in reality, must have struck the wisest among them, as well as those who are dazzled by outward Pomp. For the Judicious would consider the Simplicity and Poverty of their Ancestors, as the true Sources of the civil and military Virtues which had exalted their State to such Power and Glory: And others imagining they ow'd their Greatness to themselves, would look upon themselves as greater and more considerable than their Forefathers, because they were richer and more voluptuous. This was undoubtedly the Motive that induced *Virgil* to give a Place to a Description of *Rome*, such as it was in the Time of *Evander*, in this Part of his Poem. *Virgil* tells us, that the next Day after the Sacrifice celebrated in Honour of *Hercules*, *Æneas* finding an Opportunity to lead *Evander* into Discourse about the Men and Manners of his Country, the King going back to the remotest Times, gave *Æneas* the ancient History of the Territory of *Rome*, and of the Condition that Country was in, when leaving *Arcadia* he came to settle up-  
on

on the Banks of the *Tiber*. " These Forests,  
 " said he, were anciently inhabited by Nymphs  
 " and Fauns that ow'd their Origin to no  
 " other Country ; the Men were rude and wild,  
 " as the Trees of the Woods, which gave them  
 " Birth. They were so unciviliz'd, that they  
 " knew not how to yoke the Ox to the  
 " Plow, and liv'd upon Acorns. *Saturn* driven  
 " from Heaven by his Father, took Refuge in  
 " *Italy*, to the great Happiness of this People.  
 " He united Men together, who liv'd in a dis-  
 " persed Manner among the Mountains, and by  
 " the Laws he introduced among them, gave  
 " Rise to that happy Age, called by the Poets  
 " *The Golden Age*. Thus did *Saturn* govern  
 " Mankind in the Calm of profound Peace.  
 " His Flight and Retreat gave this Country the  
 " Name of *Latium*. But the Fury of Avarice  
 " and War soon made a fatal Change upon this  
 " happy Situation. The People of *Ausonia*, and  
 " the Inhabitants of *Sicily* made Conquests in  
 " this Country, and were the Cause of its chang-  
 " ing its Name oftener than once. The Inha-  
 " bitants were subjected to Kings, amongst  
 " whom one called *Tibris*, gave his Name to the  
 " River formerly called *Albula*."

*Evander* after this narrates, " How the Desti-  
 " nies led him into *Italy*, and what Monuments  
 " will preserve the Memory of his Arrival there  
 " to latest Posterity." After having shewn  
*Aeneas* some very remarkable Places, " He con-  
 " ducted him, says *Virgil*, to the Spot where  
 " the *Capitol* now stands, which was then quite  
 " over-run with Briars and Thorns. And he  
 " adds, That a religious Horror seiz'd Men at  
 " at the Sight of this Place : The Rock itself  
 " and the Forest which cover'd it, inspir'd them  
 " with

“ with an awful Panick. This Forest, said  
 “ *Evander*, and this little Hill, where the Trees  
 “ make so thick a Shade, is inhabited by a God.  
 “ We know not what God: The *Arcadians*  
 “ think they have often seen *Jupiter* himself  
 “ there, raising a Tempest in the Air by his tremendous Arm, and shaking his Thunder.  
 “ Observe, says *Evander*, the Ruins of two ancient Castles, one built in Honour of *Janus*, called *Janiculum*; the other in Honour of *Saturn*, named *Saturnia*.” “ During this  
 “ Conversation, says *Virgil*, *Evander* and *Æneas*  
 “ had come near to *Evander*’s House, and heard  
 “ the bellowing of the Cattle, which pastured in  
 “ the Place where now stands the *Roman Forum*.”  
*Evander*, when he came to his own House said to *Æneas*, “ *Hercules*, the Subduer of so many  
 “ Enemies, did not disdain this Dwelling: He  
 “ had no other Palace: Do you, illustrious  
 “ Guest, in like Manner, despise the Pageantry  
 “ of Riches, and conform yourself to the Manners of the God, whom we have received  
 “ here: Do not you make us feel the Poverty of  
 “ our Cottages more than he did.”

Amidst the various Reflexions which this Passage seems to suggest, Mr. *L’Abbé Fraquier* singled out this, which *Virgil*’s Care to characterise the *Capitol*, leads naturally to: As if *Jupiter*, who was afterwards called *Jupiter Capitolinus*, had from the remotest Times chosen this Place, preferably to all others, for displaying his awful Power in a Manner that should strike the whole World with Respect and Dread. The *Capitol* was, in the Imagination of the People, as it were the Basis and Foundation of the whole *Roman Empire*. From hence came that unlimited Power that made all the Nations of  
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the Earth tremble. *Juno*, in the Harangue *Horace* makes her speak to the Gods, expresses the Roman Greatness by no other Words but these:

*Stet Capitolium fulgens.*

And, as if the Fortune of the Empire depended upon the Duration of the *Capitol*, she adds,

*Triumphatiffue possit Roma ferox dare jura Medis.*

And to mark out the Eternity of the Roman Empire, the same *Horace* speaks of the Stability of the *Capitol*. — *Dum Capitolium scandet cum tæta virgine pontifex.* And *Virgil* thus: *Dum domus Æneæ Capitoli immobile saxum accolet imperiumque pater Romanus habebit.* And *Horace*, to signify the Roman Empire, says simply, *The Capitol, Dum Capitolio Regina dimensas ruinas, funus & imperio parabat.* This Stroke in *Virgil* is one of those which are peculiar to him, and which having nothing in common with *Homer*, leave him all the Glory due to a great Genius, without giving any room to detract from him by the Reproach of Borrowing, and of Imitation.

DIS



**A DISSERTATION** *upon the*  
*Origin and Progress of Rhetorick*  
*among the Greeks.*

By **Mr. HARDION.**

*Read to the Academy of Literature, November*  
*14th, 1732.\**

**E**loquence, considered in general, comprehends every Object of Discourse, and does not belong more particularly to Prose than to Poetry. It consists in the Art of saying what is proper on any Subject, placing Things in due Order, and giving them suitable Ornaments. 'Tis by this Art the Divine, the Philosopher, the Historian, the Orator, and the Poet, are Masters of their Hearers, and lead their Passions as they please. The first Legislators of Greece had labour'd perhaps in vain to establish Religion and Laws in their respective Countries, if they had not employed all the Power and Charms of Elo-

\* Memoirs, Tom. 9. p. 200.

Eloquence, to conquer the Indocility natural to Men, and even taken the Assistance of harmonious Verse, as one of the surest Ways the Art of Speaking can put in Practice in order to attain its Ends. *Plato*, instructed by *Socrates*, proposed a new System of Logick, of Morals, and of Politicks, to the World. But however sublime his Ideas were, he had never acquired the Surname of *Divine*, had he offered them to the Publick in a dry, insipid, and ungainful Form; and had he not been as great an Orator, and perhaps as good a Poet as he was a Philosopher.

What shall I say of *Empedocles*, *Parmenides*, *Lucretius*, and many other Philosophers? The Subjects they undertook to explain were abstruse and obscure, but they knew how to hide the Thorns under the Flowers they had gathered in the Garden of the Muses, and imitated the Physician, who rubbed the Lips of the Cup with Honey, to tempt the Child to swallow his bitter Medicine. 'Tis thus Eloquence exerts itself to disguise Truth, and remove its austere and forbidding Appearance: It aims at insinuating into the Heart, by flattering the Ear, which is proud and delicate, and repudiates whatever is not sweet and pleasant.

But this Eloquence, is it Nature's Gift, and does it stand in no Need of Rules and Precepts? I answer, Study alone, without the Help of a rich and fertile Genius, can produce nothing great or perfect: But on the other Side, we can expect nothing from the happiest Genius but an useless Abundance, and a blind Impetuosity, if it be not nourished with solid Knowledge, and directed by Precepts. There is an Art of Eloquence, and this Art is nothing else but a Collection of Observations made by Men of Taste and Judgment upon



upon the Works of those who spoke and wrote well. Their Remarks have served for Rules to good Speaking and Writing; and these Remarks digested into Form and Order, compose what we call Rhetorick (*l*).

In order to discover the Origin of this Art in Greece, we must go as far back as the Times when the *Greeks* first began to polish their Language, and to put a Value upon Works of Genius. It will not be quite impertinent to hearken a little to the Accounts they have left us of the Manner in which they imagined Rhetorick was sent them from Heaven. For they could not persuade themselves so useful an Art was a human Invention; and they look'd upon it as the richest Blessing the Gods could have sent them. They tell us, that in the first Ages of the World Men liv'd in a dispers'd Manner, eat the Herbs of the Fields as the Brutes, and shelter'd themselves, like them, in Caves, or in Thickets. They had not Understanding enough to perceive the Advantages of forming themselves into Societies: They, on the contrary, were in perpetual War one with another, either for the Acorns on which they fed, or for some other Object of their Passions (*m*). The Weaker were oppressed by the Stronger; as were the latter in their Turn by the other Animals Nature had furnished with strong Arms, whilst Men had nothing to defend themselves against them.

The Birds of Prey, who surpassed them in Swiftness, attacked them at as great a Disadvantage as the Cranes did the Pigmies according to *Homer*. The Lions, the Tigers, and the Bears,

(*l*) Cicero de orat. l. 1. c. 23.

(*m*) *Aristides's* 1st Discourse upon Rhetorick, against the *Gorgias* of *Plato*.

Bears, pursued them incessantly : Their Condition was even more miserable than that of the weakest Animals, who have either their Shells to retire into for Safety and Shelter, or their Fleeces to protect them against the Injuries of the Weather. Destitute of all Assistance, and assaulted on all Hands, they had perished in stupid Silence, and the human Race would have been quite extinct, had not *Prometheus* become their Intercessor with *Jupiter*. He laid before him, in the most pathetick Manner, the Misery and Distress of Mankind. The Sovereign of the Gods was moved with Compassion, and after having considered some time upon the different Ways of relieving them, he determines to send them Rhetorick. Its first Task should be to persuade them to unite for their common Defence, and to inspire into them the Love of Justice, which alone could establish durable Society among them. *Jupiter*, after this Deliberation, calls his Son *Mercury* to him, and orders him to carry Rhetorick to Mankind, not to be given to them all promiscuously ; for it was not necessary that every one should have a Share of this Present : But his Intention was, that he should choose amongst them such as by their natural Dispositions seemed most capable of making a right Use of it, whether for their own Conservation, or for the Good of their Fellow-creatures. *Mercury* executes *Jupiter's* Orders, and scarcely had Rhetorick been shown to Mankind, when their Eyes were opened to discern their own Misery ; and they became ashamed of the Brutal Life they led amidst the other Animals. They ceased to make War one against another : They soon left the Mountains, and gathered together into Troops, in different Cantons. They did not immediately  
begin

begin to build Houses to themselves; but their Ideas gradually develop'd, and their Industry augmented, in Proportion as Rhetorick gained Hearing from them. They founded Cities, and distributed the Inhabitants into different Classes and Tribes. They established Laws, under the Authority of which they might live securely, and appointed Magistrates to make them observ'd. In fine, when they reflected upon the happy Change of their Condition, they lifted their Eyes to Heaven, from whence their Happiness came, and penetrated with lively Gratitude to the Gods; they offered to them Thanksgiving in Songs of Praise, as the first Fruits of their Faculty of Speech. Thus did Man get out of his original Stupidity, and raise himself to sovereign Greatness: Thus, with the Assistance of the Arms of Rhetorick alone, he ceased to be the Dupe and Prey of other Animals, and became absolute Lord of all that breathes upon Earth.

If we strip this Tale of all the Marvellous, Fable hath mingled with it, we find in it an exact Picture of the State, in which, according to ancient Traditions, *Greece* was before Eloquence had expelled Barbarity from among them: For tho' the Writers who have left us these Traditions, speak of Men and all Countries in general, 'tis certain they had the Inhabitants of *Greece* chiefly in their View.

(n) *Diodorus Siculus* had learned from the most ancient *Greek* Monuments, that the first Men had no Ideas of Laws, Policy, or Government, that they rovd from Place to Place seeking Pasturage, and liv'd like the Brutes upon the Herbs and wild Fruits. We find in a Fragment ascribed to

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*Orpheus*

(n) Lib. i. l. 2.



*Orpheus* (o), that they eat one another ; and that the Stronger devoured the Weaker. What do we not owe, says *Euripides* (p), to the God who established Policy amongst Mankind, and brought them out of the Barbarity in which they lay deeply plunged ? He first of all opened the Eyes of their Reason, and then he gave them the Faculty of speaking, to communicate their Thoughts with one another. *Isocrates* (q) likewise takes notice, that so soon as the Art of Persuasion was introduced among Men, they not only ceased to live like brute Beasts, but that they united together, built Cities, and established Laws.

I might bring many other Testimonies from *Greek* Writers, and add to them many from *Latin* ones, who had taken these Traditions from the most ancient Sources. Both agree unanimously, that the *Greeks* ow'd to Eloquence chiefly the Establishment of their Laws, Religion, and their first Governments, all useful Arts and Politeness, whether of Language, or Manners. (r) But there have been Philosophers, who have pretended, that all the Marvels, the Honour of which is ascribed to Eloquence, were rather the Effects of the Prudence and Learning of the first Legislators.

It is true, that Prudence and Learning were absolutely necessary ; and that Discourse, the most adorn'd, is but empty and ridiculous Jargon, if not supported by Solidity of Sentiments. But it is no less true, that if the Knowledge of those first Legislators had been mute, or destitute of Eloquence,

(o) In *Sextus Empiricus* advers. Rhetor. p. 295.

(p) In his *Suppliants*, v. 207.

(q) *Orat.* 3. ad *Mæclim*.

(r) *Cicero* de *orat.* de *invent.* &c. *Hor.* l. 1. *Sat.* 3. *Lucret.* &c.

quence, it would have been of very little Use, either to them, or to the People they had a Mind to instruct. For it must be acknowledged, that to induce wild and savage Men, living in a scattered Manner upon Mountains and in Forests, to Union and Society, it would not have been enough to have said reasonable Things to them, but they must have been made to feel them. In one Word, it was necessary to speak to Men in a Manner capable of attracting, touching and persuading them.

When they had founded Cities, was it not requisite to make them perceive, that they could not hope to live in Security and Tranquillity without Faith and Justice? To teach them to obey Men willingly and without Constraint? to make them feel Pleasure and Glory in enterprising the greatest Works; nay, in sacrificing their Lives for the common Good of their Fellow-Citizens? Now, can it be imagined, that without Eloquence, it would have been possible to have insinuated into them Maxims so new, so opposite to their Prejudices, so repugnant to their inveterate Habits and their natural Liberty? Further, I ask, if it was not necessary to employ all the Force of Reason, and all the Charms of Persuasion, to engage those, who because of their superior Strength knew no other Tribunal but their own Will, and no other Judges but their own Passions, to come under the Yoke of Law, and submit to the Authority of Magistracy, and to look upon the Weak, whose Masters they reckon'd themselves, as their Equals?

But let us come to the Application of these Principles, and see if it was really by Eloquence that the *Greeks* were civilized. They can't refuse

that they liv'd in Ignorance and Barbarity, till the *Egyptians* brought Colonies into *Greece*, and with them their Religion, Laws, Arts, and Sciences (s). When the Shepherds had rendered themselves Masters of *Egypt*, the more considerable Inhabitants of this Kingdom, and above all, the Priests, were obliged to search for new Habitations in other Countries. *Cecrops* went in *Phanician* Ships into *Greece*, and settled in *Attica*. There he found a Race of Vagabonds, as ferocious as the Beasts with whom they lived. His first Care was to invite them to unite into Society. (t) He distributed them into twelve Villages, of which he composed the Kingdom of *Athens*. He taught them the Religion of his Country, and gave them Laws, the chief of which had Marriage for its Object; for they had, as yet, no Idea of the conjugal Union. They satiated their Lust promiscuously, and Children knew not their Parents.

*Deucalion*, (u) Son of *Prometheus*, who was an *Egyptian*, came a little after, and settled first in *Phocis*, and afterwards in *Thessaly*. 'Tis to be presumed, that he was instructed in the same Sciences as his Father; and see what *Æschylus* (x) makes *Prometheus* say of the Knowledge which he had communicated to Men. "I have  
 " made them who were so stupid, capable of  
 " thinking and discoursing. They opened their  
 " Eyes and saw nothing, their Ears and heard  
 " no.

(s) Joan. Marsham in Can. Chron. Euseb. Chron. l. 1. Tzetzes Chil. 5. cap. 3. Syncillus, page 183. Strabo, l. 9. p. 397.

(t) Euseb. in Chron. & in præparat. Evangel. l. 10. c. 9. Athenæus, l. 13.

(u) Epoch 2. Marmor Oxon. Vide notas historicas Diod. Sicul. l. 1. Euseb. Chron. l. 2. Strabo, l. 9.

(x) In Prometheo, v. 442.



“ nothing. Like the Phantoms which appear  
 “ in a Dream, they had nothing but flattering  
 “ and confused Ideas. They neither knew how  
 “ to prepare the Brick, nor form the Wood to  
 “ make Houses to themselves. They lodged  
 “ in dark Caverns, or in Holes like the Beasts.  
 “ They understood none of the Signs which  
 “ prognosticate the Winter Ice, an approaching  
 “ Spring, or the Season that discloses and ripens  
 “ the Fruits. In fine, they had not hitherto  
 “ made any use of their Reason, when I came  
 “ to teach them the Rising and Setting of the  
 “ Stars, arithmetical Computations, Grammar,  
 “ and the Art of Memory, the Mother of Elo-  
 “ quence and of all the Arts.”

*Cadmus*, about fifty Years afterwards, led a new Colony of *Egyptians* and *Phœnicians* into *Greece*. He made his first Settlement in *Bœotia*, and there built the City of *Thebes* (y). He communicated to the People who put themselves under his Government, the Religion, Laws, and Wisdom of the *Egyptians*. He taught them the Art of Writing, and instructed them in the Worship of *Mercury*, *Apollo*, and the *Muses*, the titular Divinities of those who exercise themselves in the Rhetorical Art; for the Orators and Poets were under their Patronage. *Mercury* was honoured in *Egypt* as the Inventor of Letters, and the God of Eloquence. *Apollo* and the *Muses* had learned the Science of Harmony from him (z). (a) The *Greeks* began to invoke them, and the first who distinguished themselves by their Eloquence, were regarded as the Sons, or Disciples, either of *Mercury*, or of *Apollo*, or of some one of the *Muses*.

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*Linus*

(y) Joan. Marth. Chron. Herod. l. 5. Diod. Sic. l. 4.

(z) Aristides orat. contra Gorgiam Platonis. Dion. Hal. de Arte Rhet. cap. 1. Homer. Hymn. in Mercurium.

(a) Socrates in *Phædrus* invokes the *Muses*.

*Linus* (b), the most ancient we know any thing of, who was of *Thebes*, signalized himself by the Invention of the *Rythmos*, of which is formed what the Rhetoricians call the oratorical Measure.

*Orpheus* was, according to some Authors, his Disciple, and he passed for the Son of the Muse *Calliope*, who presided over Eloquence (c). He undertook to break the Savageness of the *Odrysians*, a People inhabiting Mount *Pangæus* in *Thrace*. Mildness and Insinuation were the only Arms he employed: He had Success, and this Miracle appears as great as if he had tam'd the furious Lions and Tigers. They have gone so far as to say, that the Forests, sensible to the Musick of his Voice, followed him to hear it. The Miracle of *Amphion* was no less famous. He advis'd the *Thebans* to wall their City. The Discourse he held with them had such an Effect upon their Minds, that every one strove with another who should have the greatest Share in carrying on the Work; and it was pushed with such Alacrity, that it was said the Stones, animated by his harmonious Lyre, ranged themselves spontaneously into good Order (d).

Let us observe, that this marvellous (e) Lyre of *Amphion*, as well as that of *Orpheus*, was the same with that which *Themistocles* used afterwards to deliver the *Athenians* from the *Persian Yoke*, when he persuaded them to leave their City, their Wives, and Children, and their Gods, and embarking in Ships, commit themselves to the Caprice of Fortune and the Winds. But what? Was the Eloquence of *Amphion* and *Orpheus* indeed

(b) Diodor. Sic. 1. 3.

(c) Maximus Tyrius λόγῳ κα.

(d) Horat. art. poet.

(e) Maximus Tyrius, ibidem.

deed so perfect? and is there no Hyperbole in what Antiquity has transmitted to us on this Subject? I believe indeed there is some Exaggeration, and I don't pretend to magnify the Eloquence of that Time, above what it could then have been arrived at: But however imperfect it is supposed to have been at its Beginning, it might have surpriz'd by its Novelty a rude and simple People, and have made a deeper Impression upon their Minds, than the Eloquence of the best Orator or Poet can do in more refined and enlighten'd Ages. 'Tis on this Account, that the first Persons who cultivated it were looked upon as extraordinary Men. They were believed to be inspired by the Gods; and the Honours paid to them excited the Emulation of all who found themselves capable of imitating them.

We need not seek for any other Cause of the Progress it made; because when the Culture of the Arts is glorious and profitable, we may be sure they will march with Rapidity to Perfection. It was honourable and advantageous to be eloquent; and by consequence there was ardent Ambition to become such; and I have no reason to suspect I shall be thought to advance a Paradox, when I say, that in the Time of the Trojan War Eloquence had already made a very great Progress in Greece. Cicero (f) remarks very judiciously, that Homer would not have boasted so much of the Eloquence of Ulysses and Nestor, if in the heroick Times the Rhetorical Art had not been in very great Esteem. We learn from Homer and Hesiod, that long before their Days Oratory was a principal Part in the Institution of Princes destin'd to govern Men, and to conduct great

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(f) Cicero in Bruto, cap. 10.



great Enterprizes. This was the Quality most sought after, and most admired in them. The Perfections of the Body held only the second Rank; and however highly Military Prowess was valued, Eloquence was prefer'd to it in the Estimation of Mankind.

*Phanix* was sent to *Troy* with *Achilles*, in the Quality of his Governor, chiefly to teach him to speak well; and in the next Place to instruct him in the Art of War.

*The Youth, as then in sage Debates unskill'd,  
And new to Perils of the direful Field:  
He bade me teach thee all the Ways of War;  
To shine in Councils, and in Camps to dare.*

HOMER'S *Iliad*, B. 9. v. 568.

This Prince was put under *Phanix*'s Care so young, that he had no Idea neither of War, nor of those Councils in which Men of Abilities display themselves to Advantage,

*The Youth, as then in sage Debates unskill'd,  
And new to Perils of the direful Field.*

The same *Achilles*, provoked by *Agamemnon*, retires into his Tent, and withdraws from the publick Deliberations, where Glory and Reputation were acquired.

*The stern Achilles, steadfast in his Hate,  
Nor mix'd in Combat, nor in Council join'd.*

*Iliad*, B. 1. v. 635.

*Ulysses*, in the Judgment of *Agamemnon*, had both the Merit of understanding how to give Advice, and how to lead an Army to Battle.

*Great*

*Great in the Council, glorious in the Field,*

*Iliad, B. 2. v. 273.*

*Homer speaking of Thoas, the bravest of the Etolians, adds to his Praise, that few Greeks were superior to him in those Assemblies, where the young Men disputed the Prize of Eloquence.*

*Thoas, the bravest of th' Ætolian Force,  
Skill'd to direct the Jav'lin's distant Flight,  
And bold to combat in the standing Fight;  
Nor more in Councils fam'd for solid Sense,  
More winning Words and heav'nly Eloquence.*

*Iliad, B. 15. v. 320.*

*Nestor, in the Beginning of the Iliad, is design'd by the Title of the Pylian Orator, preferably to that of King of Pylos, as if the former had been more honourable than the latter. Nestor rises, says Homer, that eloquent Orator of the Pylians, whose Discourse was sweeter than Honey,*

*To calm their Passion with the Words of Age,  
Slow from his Seat arose the Pylian Sage,  
Experienc'd Nestor, in Persuasion skill'd,  
Words sweet as Honey from his Lips distill'd.*

*Iliad, B. 1. v. 330.*

I should never have done, were I to repeat here all the Passages in which *Homer* applauds the Eloquence of his Heroes, and expresses the high Consideration in which Eloquence was held: But the most remarkable of all is that where *Agamemnon*, charmed with an Harangue in which *Nestor* had propos'd a new Order of Battle, cries out

out in Transport: " Venerable old Man, you  
 " certainly surpass all the *Greeks* in Eloquence.  
 " O *Jupiter*, O *Minerva*, O *Apollo*, how happy  
 " should I be, to have in my Army ten Men as  
 " capable of speaking well in Council as you!  
 " The City of *Priam* should soon be reduced  
 " under our Power, and yield to the Force of  
 " our Arms."

*To him the King: How much thy Years excel  
 In Arts of Council; and in speaking well!  
 Ob! would the Gods, in love to Greece decree,  
 But ten such Sages as they grant in thee;  
 Such Wisdom soon should Priam's Force destroy,  
 And soon should fall the haughty Tow'rs of Troy!*  
*Iliad, B. 2. v. 440.*

*Agamemnon* had in his Army a great Number of Generals of distinguished Valour: But he reckoned upon more Service from the Wisdom and Eloquence of one Man, than from the Bravery of all his other intrepid Warriors.

It is in the same Sense that *Ulysses* says to *Neoptolemus* in the *Philoctet* (e) of *Sophocles*,  
 " That when he was young, he fancied like  
 " him, that the Talent of Speaking was useless,  
 " and that it is the Arm that must execute all;  
 " but that he had learned by Experience, that it  
 " is the Tongue, and not the Hand, which go-  
 " verns among Mankind.

To these Encomiums of *Homer* upon Eloquence, I shall add a Passage from *Hesiod*, which will compleat the Proof of the high Esteem in which Eloquence was held in the most ancient Times: It was considered as the chief Perfection of Kings, and the most necessary Quality

(e) Verse 9.



in the Art of Government. *Calliope* (f) was the Muse of Eloquence, according to *Hesiod*, and she had the first Place among the Muses, because it is she who attends Kings, and makes them respected by their Subjects. Happy the King who is destin'd to Glory by the Muses, and whom they look upon at his Birth with a propitious Eye! They give a melodious Harmony to his Tongue, and the Words which come forth from his Lips enchant his Hearers. The People's Eyes are fixed upon him, when he pronounces his Edicts, that are always dictated by Equity. He speaks with Assurance, and knows how to accommodate the most difficult and perplexing Affairs.

Kings, continueth he, acquire the Reputation of Prudence and Address, when amidst their People assembled together, they can by their tender and consoling Speeches make them, in a Moment, forget all the Distresses and Calamities they had suffered. When they march through the City, they are easily distinguished in the Croud which invirons them: All address their Vows and Petitions to them with profound Respect, as to some Divinity: This is the Present the Muses make to Men when they give them a King, they have taken a Delight to form and instruct. — What a Happiness is it for a King to be beloved by the Muses! His Voice charms by its sweet Melody.

If it be true then, as it appears to be, that Eloquence began to be cultivated in *Greece* soon after the Arrival of *Cadmus*; and that from that Time to the taking of *Troy*, it had never been neglected,

(f) In *Theogonia*, v. 79. See a Passage in the *Odyssey* of *Homer*, l. 6. v. 168.

neglected, on Account of its great Utility ; we may easily imagine, that Observations were made upon good and bad Speaking ; and that in Consequence of such Observations, Rules and a Method of Speaking had been found out and established. If *Phœnix* instructed *Achilles* in Eloquence, he certainly did it by Precepts : If young Warriors vied one with another in Oratory, they aspired without doubt to a Superiority that could only be assigned to one above the rest by Judges acquainted with certain Principles, by which the Competition was to be decided. There were therefore at that Time, Precepts and Rules for Eloquence ; and that is, Rhetorick. We are told that *Pitheus*, Grandfather by the Mother's Side to *Theseus*, gave the first publick Lessons of Oratory to *Trezene* (g), in a Temple consecrated to the Muses ; and that he had composed a Treatise upon the Art, which was published by an Inhabitant of *Epidaurus* (h). The Fact is not only possible, but it is very probable ; and hence I may infer, that it is not astonishing that Rhetorick should have been brought to such a Pitch of Perfection in *Homer's* Time : But that it was really so, I shall endeavour to prove in another Dissertation ; after which I will continue to trace the History of the Progress of Rhetorick in *Greece*, till its Decline, under the Successors of *Alexander the Great*.

(g) Pausanias in Corinth. p. 184.

(h) Pausanias says he had read this Treatise.



*A Second DISSERTATION*  
*upon the Origin and Progress of*  
*RHETORICK in Greece.*

*By Mr. HARDION.*

*Read to the Academy of Literature, August 14th,*  
*1733\*.*

IT is pretended, that till *Homer's* Days the Greeks had no Idea, neither of good Poetry, nor of true Oratory ; that he both invented and perfected Epick Poetry, and that before him there was no Person to serve him for a Model (i). This Opinion never had any other Foundation but an Excess of Admiration for *Homer's* Poems : But its Asserters have not taken Notice, that by thus raising *Homer* too high, they have given a Handle to the Invidious of his Glory to diminish him in the Opinion of those who are not capable of making a fair Judgment of the Matter.

If the more easy Arts, even the most frivolous, had their Beginning and gradual Progress, and did not arrive but Step by Step to their Perfection, can we ever believe, that there was no Interval between the Invention and the Perfection of an Epick Poem ? i. e. of a Work that

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\* *Memoirs, &c. T. 9. p. 212.*

(i) *Velleius Paterculus. l. 1. cap. 5.*



requires the greatest Extent of Knowledge, the most profound Thinking, and the most enlarged Acquaintance with Men, Manners and Things; and with regard even to the Form of it, infinite Art in the Distribution and Ordonnance of the Parts; and, besides all, the Ornaments and Graces of Soft and Simple, Shining and Florid, Majestick and Noble Elevation, suitable to the respective Characters it introduces speaking, and to the different Manners and Passions it would represent or express.

Some have been fond to make *Homer* pass for the Inventor of Epick Poetry: And upon this Supposition it has been concluded, that he could only have given a very imperfect Sketch of it; and that notwithstanding the Superiority of his Talents, he wanted the Advantage of living in a more enlightened and polished Age than that in which he flourished.

But what becomes of this Reasoning, if it be true, that *Homer* did not invent the *Epopœe*, and that many Poets before him had tried their Genius on that Kind of Poetry? Or, if it be true, that Eloquence had been a long Time before the principal Study of the Youth, and the most essential Part in their Formation? And this, I think, was sufficiently proved in my first Dissertation.

I propose in this to give some Account of the Progress Eloquence and Rhetorick had made in *Homer's* Days; to judge well of which, it is necessary to consider in what State the *Greek* Language was when *Homer* wrote his two Poems, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. And it can't be disown'd that it had already all the Characters of a rich, polished, regular Language, capable of taking any Shape, and of being accommodated to every  
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fort of Writing. It has acquir'd no new Perfection since *Homer*, either with respect to Sweetness, Nervousness, or Harmony. It is even easy to apprehend, from the various Inflexions of Nouns and Verbs, and the great Number of those called irregular ones in *Homer*, to what Point the *Greeks* had already polished it by their Labours, having taken from the Primitive Words all their original Harshness and Roughness.

Grammar was therefore, at this Time, in its Perfection, and so was Poetry too; at least, so far as on the one hand it regards the Plan, Ordonnance, and Conduct of the *Epopée*; and on the other, the technical Structure of the Verse, and the several Figures of Speech. *Aristotle* and *Horace* propose no other Rules with respect to any of these, but those observed by *Homer*: And the Poets who came after him have acquired Fame only in Proportion as they have been able to come nearer to this grand Pattern.

But seeing we must allow Grammar and Poetry to have been at their highest Perfection in *Homer's* Time, we must likewise yield that Rhetorick had made the same Progress, its Precepts being involved within those of Grammar and Poetry. The former gives it its Rules for Purity, Precision, and Correctness of Speech; the other furnishes the Orator with the Ornaments which are essential to Eloquence. As jealous as *Cicero* was to raise the Profession of Oratory above that of Poetry, he could not choose but acknowledge, that they have a very near Resemblance and Affinity. The latter is more confined by Numbers and Measure, but at the same Time it hath a greater Liberty of Expression. They have many Ornaments in common; and in this Respect it is not

not easy to distinguish them: But what they are the same in, is, that they are not limited by any Boundaries, but may, at their Pleasure diffuse their Riches and Abundance upon any Subject. *We do the same*, says he elsewhere, *as the Poets, not only with Regard to Numbers and Measures, but even with respect to all the other Ornaments of Discourse.* The Poet, according to the same Author, is so much more worthy of Praise, that being more fettered by the Measure of Versification, he can however appropriate to himself all the Excellencies of the Orator (a).

It hath likewise been observed, that a Kind of Fury is no less requisite to Poetry than to Prose, and that without a sort of Enthusiasm, an Orator could produce nothing truly great: That by comparing *Demosthenes* (b) with *Homer*, it hath been found that their Genius's resembled one another in several Respects; that they employed the same Passions, the same Emotions, the same Address to diversify their Turns, in order the more effectually to attract their Auditors, and the same Elegance and Ease.

This Resemblance between the Poet and the Orator is yet more sensible in an Epick Poem, than in any other Kind of Poetry. The Poet appears very little in the *Epopœe*: It is his several Personages who speak and act almost throughout all, whether it be in Council, when they are deliberating what to do, or what to avoid; or whether in the Course of the Epick Action, there be any Occasion to accuse or defend, to blame or praise, to entreat, or threaten, to exhort or console: Those who hold these Discourses have  
always

(a) De orat. l. c. 16. 59.

(b) See a Dialogue of Lucian in Praise of Demosthenes.



always Persuasion for their Scope, and they must employ that Art to gain that End, according as different Circumstances, Manners, and Characters require. The Poems of *Homer* furnish Examples of all these different Kinds of Oratory; and if we find in them an exact Observance of all the Rules of Rhetorick, is there not Reason to believe that these Rules were well known in *Homer's* Time?

There are three Things to be considered in an oratorical Discourse; the Invention, the Disposition, and the Elocution (*c*). Invention does not barely consist in finding out easily the Thoughts which ought to enter into the Discourse; that is easily done, provided one hath his Mind well cultivated and replenished by reading, and Excess is a commoner Fault than Sterility: There is even a dangerous Fertility, which is very unjustly dignified with the Name of Genius, that only serves to stifle the good Seeds by a Mixture of poisonous Weeds, and to render the Mind barren in just and reasonable Thoughts.

True Genius, Invention properly so called, consists in choosing from among the many Thoughts which present themselves, those that are the most suitable to the Subject one is treating, the most noble and solid Sentiments; and in calling off those which are either false, frivolous or trivial; in considering the Time and the Place where one is to speak, what one owes to himself, and what is owing to one's Hearers; in one Word, in saying what is proper, and what Decency demands and admits.

It would not be difficult, were it necessary, to prove *Homer's* Superiority above all other Poets, in Richness and Fecundity of Invention. This  
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Pre-eminence was never disputed him: But some modern Writers do not allow him to have been so just and decent in the Choice of his Thoughts. I might satisfy myself with opposing to such, some Criticks of the first Character of all Ages and Nations. All of them, with one Consent, acknowledge, that *Homer* never says any thing out of its Place, or contrary to Decorum. *Qui nil molitur ineptè*, says *Horace*. All own that he chose his Thoughts well, and that he rejected those he found he could not properly introduce. *Et quæ desperat tractatu nitescere posse, relinquit*, says the same Author. We may judge what he thought of Justness and Propriety, by the Commendations he gives to Discourses which had these two Qualities. He commonly designs them both by the same Word *πυκινός*. *πυκινῇ, βελῇ, πυκινὸν ἔπος*, Discourse full of good Sense, and in which there is nothing superfluous or useless. I have not yet learned, says *Telemachus*, the Prudence and the Precision necessary to speak well.

*How shall I meet, or how accost the Sage,  
Unskill'd in Speech, nor yet mature of Age?*

*Odyssæy, B. 3. v. 30.*

*Homer* characterises the good Orator, by saying, that he speaks with Judgment, and does not mistake what he ought to say; and that he seasons his Discourse with an Air of Sweetness and Modesty, that makes him admir'd by all who hear him.

*This Man with Energy of Thought controuls,  
And steals, with modest Violence, our Souls.*

*He*

*He speaks reserv'dly, but he speaks with Force ;  
Nor can one Word be chang'd, but for a worse.*  
Odyss. B. 8. v. 190.

He elsewhere characterises the bad Speaker by the opposite ones, when he says, speaking of *Theſites*, that he was an impertinent Babler, who spoke without Measure, without Discretion, without Reserve, and who observed no Decency.

*Theſites only clamour'd in the Throng,  
Loquacious, loud, and turbulent of Tongue.  
Aw'd by no Shame, by no Respect controul'd,  
In Scandal busy, in Reproaches bold,  
With witty Malice studious to defame,  
Scorn all his Joy, and Laughter all his Aim.*

*Iliad, B. 2. v. 255.*

Is it necessary, to finish the Proof of what I have been advancing, to bring any of the Speeches in *Homer*? Besides the Embarrassment, which to choose out of so great a Number scattered thro' his Poems, it is difficult to form a Judgment of their Truth and Propriety, or to relish all their Beauties, without seeing them in their Places, and as they stand circumstantiated; or if we divest them of all the Ornaments which give true Charms to Sentiments. However, I will venture to translate here the Discourse of *Ulysses* to *Nausicaë*, in the sixth Book of the *Odyssey*. I shall confine myself principally to this one Example, because it is short, and in narrow Bounds contains the more essential Parts of an oratorical Discourse: And in the second Place, because it has been said (d), that this whole Passage of *Homer* is contrary to good Manners, and

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upon

(d) P. Rapin, in his *Comparison of Homer and Virgil*.



upon this Principle it hath been concluded, that in his Time Manners were not yet well formed and polished.

*Ulysses*, after having been twenty Days the Sport of an enraged Sea, arrives, by swimming, in the Island of the *Phæacians*. Oppressed with Disquiet and Fatigue he falls asleep, and does not awake till next Day. He hears a Noise as of Women: It was *Nauficaë*, Daughter to the King of the *Phæacians*, and a Band of young Maids accompanying her. He was naked, and reduc'd by Hunger to the last Extremity; and he knew not in what Country he was; whether the People were cruel and savage, or susceptible of Pity. To know the Truth of this Matter, he accosts these Women; and having cut a Branch of an Olive well garnished with Leaves to cover his Nakedness, he gets out of the Covert where he lay hid. As a Lion famished and oppressed by Rain and Winds roves from Place to Place in Quest of some Prey, his Eyes sparkle, and Hunger so cruelly pinches him, that to assuage it he fears not to enclose himself in a Shepherd's Fold: So *Ulysses* springs out of his hiding Place to address these young Nymphs, naked as he was; for, says *Homer*, he was forced to it by Necessity. His Body being quite extenuated by Famine, and emaciated by the Sea-water, he was a horrible Sight.

They all fled but *Nauficaë*; she remained alone by the Inspiration of *Minerva*. *Ulysses* deliberates whether he should adventure to embrace her Knees, or accost her at a Distance. The latter appears better to him: He feared to offend her by coming too near: He therefore, at an awful Distance, makes this most flattering, insinuating, courteous Speech to her.

If

X 3

*Heav'n*

Heav'n bade the Deep to spare! But Heav'n my  
[Foe,

Spares only to inflict some mightier Woe :  
Inur'd to Cares, to Death in all its Forms,  
Outcast I rove, familiar with the Storms.  
Once more I view the Face of Human Kind :  
Oh ! let soft Pity touch thy gen'rous Mind !  
Unconscious of what Air I breathe, I stand  
Naked, defenceless on a Foreign Land.  
Propitious to my Wants, a Vest supply,  
To guard the Wretched from th'inclement Sky:  
So may the Gods, who Heav'n and Earth con-  
[troul,

Crown the chaste Wishes of thy virtuous Soul ;  
On thy soft Hours their choicest Blessings shed,  
Blest with a Husband be thy Bridal Bed ;  
Blest be thy Husband with a blooming Race,  
And lasting Union crown your blissful Days.  
The Gods, when they supremely bless, bestow  
Firm Union on their Favourites below ;  
Then Envy grieves, with inly-piercing Hate ;  
The Good exult, and Heav'n is in our State.

HOMER'S *Odyssæy*. Mr. POPE'S Trans-  
lation, B. 6. 175, &c. (e)

*Ulysses*, to gain the Favour of *Nausicaë*, begins with great Compliments to her Person and Beauty : He attracts her Attention by the artful Manner in which he gives her to understand, as it were without Design, that in a Voyage he had made to *Delos* he was attended with a numerous Retinue. When by the Artifice of this Exordium,

(e) I thought it would have been wrong to have attempted to translate our Author's Prose Translation, when our Language is enriched with so just and beautiful a one in such harmonious Verse.



ordium he had got Hold (so to speak) of her Ears, he represents to her in a most pathetick Manner his present Condition, and most movingly supplicates Relief from her. In fine, he concludes his Discourse in a most noble Manner, capable of making a very deep Impression by the Dignity with which he spoke, and the good Sense he expressed; capable of leaving, as was said of the Eloquence of *Pericles*, something pungent in the Soul of her to whom he was addressing himself. And this is the Effect it produced: His Discourse inspired *Nausicaë* with vast Esteem for this unknown Person, as deformed and hideous as he was, and an ardent Desire to succour him: She thought that he must be a Person of no mean Rank, and one not devoid of Reason and good Sentiments.

I believe there is none who does not perceive, in this Discourse of *Ulysses*, great Judgment in the Choice of the Thoughts, and above all exact Decorum (*f*), whether that which has a Relation to Manners, and procures Esteem to the Orator; or that which consists in saying what is agreeable to Time, Place, and Persons. In fine, we may observe in it, from one End to the other, those Sentiments which touch and persuade by the Characters they bear of Truth, and that good Sense with which Eloquence, if I may so speak, ought to be deeply tinctured and penetrated, *sensu tincta* (*g*).

But it is not enough that the Thoughts be fitly chosen; an Orator ought to know how to range them in their proper Places, to give them that Degree of Light they ought to have; and so that, as *Horace* expresses it, the Beginning, the

X 4

Middle,

(*f*) Cicero de orat. l. 2. cap. 43. l. 3. cap. 25.

(*g*) Quintilian, l. 4. cap. 2.

Middle, and End of the Discourse may be exactly correspondent.

*Atque ita mentitur, sic vera falsis remiscet,  
Primo ne medium, medio ne discrepet inum.*

HORAT. Art. Poet.

This is the general Rule with Regard to Oratorical Disposition : The particular Precepts respect the Preamble, the Narrative, and the Conclusion. Not to enter into a long Detail that would carry me too far, I shall content myself to observe, that the Rhetoricians have given no Rules for the different Sorts of any of these Parts of a Discourse, which *Homer* hath not put in Practice, and of which perfect Examples may not be fetch'd from his Poems. As for what regards the Art of distributing and ranging Thoughts, I will endeavour to give some Idea of it, by a short Analysis of three Discourses in the Ninth Book of the *Iliad*.

The *Trojans* had repulsed the *Greeks* into their Ships. *Agamemnon* found he could not do without the Assistance of *Achilles*. But after the Insult he had given him, how could he hope to appease so fierce and inexorable a Prince? *Ulysses*, *Phœnix*, and *Ajax* undertake the Commission, *Agamemnon* consents that they should offer in his Name to restore *Briseis* to him, to send him magnificent Presents, and to give him in Marriage the most beautiful of his Daughters. Let it be observed, that in these Times Presents were a great Mark of Honour; for otherwise it would appear ridiculous in them to have thought of gaining in that Way, a Person who was covetous of nothing but Glory and Distinction. *Ulysses*

ses speaks first. He is too wise to mention *Agamemnon's* Offers to him at first: The odious Name would have shock'd him, whose Anger was at that Instant in its full Violence. He endeavours in the Beginning of his Discourse to inspire Sentiments of Compassion for the *Greeks*, ready to sink under the Valour of *Hector*; and to represent to him, that if he with-held any longer his Assistance, it would be out of his Power to save them. Then he puts him in Mind of the sage Counsels his Father *Peleus* gave him, when he set out for *Troy*. It is an indirect Lesson, which would have offended him, had *Ulysses* given it in his own Name: But it could not fail to make a forcible Impression, when by a most magnificent *Prosopopæia*, he sets him before his Father, who exhorts him with a mild and authoritative Tone to moderate his Impetuosity, and check the Transports of his Choler. Having thus prepared him, he had Reason to think him somewhat calm'd, and then he speaks of *Agamemnon's* Offers, and sets forth the Magnificence of his Presents: And in the Conclusion he returns to new Entreaties in Favour of the *Greeks*: He owns that he was justly irritated against *Agamemnon*; but what Offence had he received from the perishing *Greeks*? and what Honour would it not be to him to save them from the Fury of the *Trojans*? He concludes with a Stroke capable of piquing *Achilles*, and turning all his Wrath against *Hector*. You may, says he, now triumph over the proud Son of *Priam*. Transported by rash Fury, he has advanced too far, and boasts, that of all the *Greeks* come here, there is none able to resist him.

This Discourse, tho' very eloquent and artful, does not persuade *Achilles*; and it was not agreeable



able to the Character of this inflexible Person to make him yield at the first Attack. He declares he will embark next Day to return into his own Country ; he invites *Phœnix* to pass the Night with him in his Tent, and to depart with him, if he would, by Break of Day. At these Words *Phœnix* melts into Tears, and appearing to listen to the Proposal of their going together, he represents to him how grievous their Separation would be to him, after their having liv'd together without losing Sight one of another since his Infancy, when *Peleus* first entrusted him with the Care of his Education in Eloquence as well as in Arms : He recalls to his Mind all the Labours he had got through in that Charge during his Infancy, which was so difficult to manage, all his Concern about him, all his Tenderneſs and Zeal for his Improvement and Glory : He endeavours to make him feel how noble and laudable it is to forgive an Enemy, who was now become sensible of his Fault, and offers him Presents by the most distinguished Chieftains in the Army, as his Embassadors ; that he himself merited Regard from him as his Guide, as his Governor ; that if he let this Occasion escape, he should repent it his whole Life : He puts him in Mind of *Meleager*, who in very like Circumstances having refused for a long Time to succour his Country, was at last forc'd to it by Necessity, and so lost the Merit and Honour of having stood by it.

By this second Discourse *Achilles* appears somewhat moved ; he is not so determined in his Resolution to embark next Day. He engages *Phœnix* to stay with him, that they might deliberate together about going or staying. *Ajax* rises, and with a disdainful Haughtineſs first addresses

dresses himself to *Ulysses*, and then turning towards *Achilles*, severely reproaches his Pride: But that he might not irritate him, he softens his Upbraidings, and concludes with a very firm, bold and pathetick Exhortation. This generous Liberty of *Ajax* astonishes and disconcerts *Achilles*: He looks upon himself as obliged to justify his Anger, but he no longer thinks of departing; yet he cannot bring himself to resolve upon returning to the Camp to assist the *Greeks*. Carry, said he, *this Answer upon the Whole, to the Greeks, that I will not take up my Arms, till Hector shall have set Fire to their Vessels, and come to threaten the Tents and Ships of the Thessalians; for as to my Tent and my Ship, as violent and audacious as Hector is, I know how to hinder him from approaching to them.*

I come now to Elocution, the third Object (b) of Rhetorical Precepts, but the most important of all its Parts; for it is principally by Elocution that the Thoughts acquire Force: It is by a delicate Choice of Words, by a judicious skilful Management of them, and by the different Kinds of Harmony resulting from hence, that the Orator sometimes diffuses himself as a mild Dew, and, softening the Heart, insensibly opens a Passage to it, and sometimes recollecting as it were himself, and gathering together his whole Force, explodes it all at once, and like Lightning bears all before him by its Violence, at the same time that it dazles by its Brightness: It is by the different Turns of Expression, and by the different Figures he uses, that the Orator attracts his Auditors, that he warms, that he charms, that he violently agitates them, and transports

(b) Quintil. Præf. 1. 8.

ports their Admiration. In fine, without Elocution the Merit of Invention and Disposition is quite lost, it totally disappears: The best Thoughts are as a Sword in its Sheath, and one does not pay great Honour to a Speaker, merely for his observing the most regular Order, because it seems to demand neither great Talents nor extraordinary Skill (i).

Can we dispute *Homer* the Glory of having eclipsed, by his superior Eloquence, the best Poets and Orators? Those, among the Moderns, who have set themselves most heartily to decry him, and to diminish him in our Esteem, have not been able to resist a Cloud of Witnesses who have unanimously declared their Admiration of the Elegance, Sweetness, Riches, and Majesty of his Stile and Expression. It is not necessary to bring Examples of this to those who are accustomed to read him in the Original; and others can only judge by Translations, in which they can only see the Stile of the Translators. But I ought not to forget to remark here, with respect to the Subject of this Dissertation, that in *Homer's* Time the three different Sorts of Elocution an Orator ought to employ, suitably to the Nature of his Thoughts, were perfectly well understood and distinguished: For a Speaker ought to take Care of Propriety and Justness in his Expressions, as well as in his Thoughts: The Whole ought to be in exact Proportion, and weighed, as it were, in the same Balance (k).

The first Kind is simple, natural, and concise. Perspicuity and Clearness make its chief Merit: In this the Orator avoids appearing numerous,  
and

(i) Quint. l. 8. c. 3.

(k) Cicero in orat. c. 2



and if he uses any Ornaments, it is always with great Modesty and Reserve. He takes an Air of Negligence, which becomes him, but which is however the Fruit of great Study and Attention. In fine, we may compare it to those frugal Tables, where the Eye is not dazzled by Splendor and Magnificence, but where Elegance and Neatness reign. *Lyfias* is quoted by the Rhetoricians, as an excellent Model of this Kind of Writing: *Homer* had before attributed it to *Menelaus*. He makes *Antenor* say, in the third Book of the *Iliad*, *That the Eloquence of Menelaus was concise, but full of Charms; that he never lost Sight of his Subject, but pursued it without stopping or digressing, and never embarrassed himself in tedious involved Periods.*

*When Atreus' Son harangu'd the list'ning Train,  
Just was his Sense, and his Expression plain,  
His Words succinct, yet full, without a Fault;  
He spoke no more than just the Thing he ought.*  
*Iliad, B. 3. v. 257.*

And it is worth our Observation, that *Homer* takes care to make all *Menelaus's* Speeches exactly conformable to this Character he gives of his Eloquence.

The second Kind is more abundant, more ample and elevated; it neither refuses shining Figures, nor harmonious Cadences: Its Aim is to gain Regard by a suitable Dress, and to insinuate itself into the Heart by its Sweetness. Such is the Eloquence of *Nestor* in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*: This is the Character *Homer* gives of it, in the first Book of the *Iliad*, when he says he spoke with charming Sweetness; and that the Words which  
flow'd

from his Mouth were smoother and more agreeable than Honey.

*Experienc'd Nestor, in Persuasion skill'd,  
Words, sweet as Honey, from his Lips distill'd.*  
*Iliad, B. I. v. 330.*

Such, generally speaking, is the Eloquence of *Isocrates*, so admired for his Sweetness and Harmony.

In fine, the third Kind is the Sublime and Lofty : It has a great and majestick Tone, which forces its Way, and by its Spirit and Vigour quite overpowers the Mind and Heart. Nothing is able to withstand its Fecundity, its Force, its Rapidity, its Vehemence.

*Demosthenes*, who among the *Athenians*, had carried this third Kind to its highest Perfection, seems to have taken *Ulysses* in *Homer* for his Model ; and we may easily perceive the Resemblance between them. When *Ulysses* went Ambassador to *Troy*, and rose to speak in the Assembly of the *Trojans*, he kept his Eyes for some time fixed on the Ground, and held his Sceptre firm and steady in his Hand : A pensive, cloudy Silence made him appear as one not instructed in the Arts of Speech ; you would have taken him for one whose Breast was so filled with Wrath, that he could not speak : But when he extended his majestick, thundering Voice, and his Words burst from him as a Torrent <sup>(1)</sup> formed by the Winter Snows, then no Mortal durst contend with him. The *Trojans*, struck with Amazement by his Eloquence, no longer ad-

(1) Quintilian, l. 12. cap. 10.

admir'd his noble and severe Air (*m*), which at first was the only Thing that attracted them.

*But when Ulysses rose, in Thought profound,  
His modest Eyes he fix'd upon the Ground;  
As one unskill'd or dumb, he seem'd to stand,  
Nor rais'd his Head, nor rais'd his scepter'd*

*[Hand :  
But when he speaks, what Elocution flows,  
Soft as the Fleeces of descending Snows !  
The copious Accents fall with easy Art,  
Melting they fall, and sink into the Heart.  
Wond'ring we hear, and fix'd in deep Surprise,  
Our Ears refute the Censure of our Eyes.*

*Iliad, Book 3.*

*Mr. POPE's Translation, v. 279. &c.*

This same *Ulysses*, or rather *Homer*, who is so admirable in moving the violent Passions, is no less so in his Use of the other Kinds of Elocution, conformably to the Nature of the Subject : He is a sovereign Master of the Art of blending them together when it is proper : He is ever diversifying his Speeches, and ever finding new Graces for them ; and instead of tiring, is ever invigorating and animating his Reader's Attention.

I now ask, for it is Time to conclude, if it be conceivable, that the Precepts of Art had no Share in all this Justness of Invention, Regularity of Ordonnance, and Beauty and Grace of Elocution, but all was owing to Nature? If the Sublime, of which Nature is the Source and Foun-

(*m*) I can't but observe, that there is a great Difference between our Author's Interpretation of this Passage of *Homer*, and *Mr. Pope's* : But it belongs not to me to judge here.



Foundation stands in need, as *Longinus* has proved (n), of being directed by Method, it is yet more necessary, that in the other Parts of Eloquence there should be an Art to teach the Orator to say only what he ought to say, and to speak as he ought, and to put every thing in its proper Place. Nature, as *Longinus* remarks, is blind, and knows not how or where she goes, without being conducted. A Ship is in Danger of perishing, if it is not prudently steer'd: It is the same with Eloquence, if it be abandoned to the unguided Impetuosity of rash and ignorant Nature.

Let us agree then, that in *Homer's* Time Rhetorick was already reduced and formed into an Art: Nay, let us say more, and grant that this Art had then been brought to its full Maturity and Perfection. Rhetoricians fetch from *Homer* alone more Examples to illustrate and support their Precepts, than from all the other Orators taken together. *Dionysius of Halicarnassus* (o) has employed a considerable Part of one of his Treatises, to shew, that there is no Figure in Rhetorick which *Homer* has not made Use of. In another Treatise (p), he endeavours to point out particular Beauties and Strokes of Art in some of his Speeches. *Hermogenes*, that subtile and profound Rhetorician declares, that *Homer* is the most perfect of Orators, as well as the most perfect of Poets. In fine, *Quintilian* (q), one of the best ancient Criticks, and the most learned Rhetoricians, proposes *Homer* as the most perfect Model, those who would attain to Eloquence

(n) Treatise of the Sublime. cap. 2.

(o) In arte Rhetor. c. 9. & 10.

(p) Περὶ ῥητορικῆς, l. 2. cap. 10.

(q) Quintil. l. 10. c. 1. & l. 12. cap. 10.

quence could set before them. As the Fountains  
says he, and the Rivers, derive their Source from  
the Ocean, so Homer is the Spring and Model of  
all Kinds of Eloquence: No Person can ever sur-  
pass him, whether by Sublimity in treating of grand  
Subjects, or by Propriety in handling lesser Matters.  
He is at once ample and concise, full of Force and  
Sweetness, equally admirable for his Riches and his  
Brevity: In a Word, he possesses in an eminent  
Degree all the Virtues and Excellencies, not only of  
the Poet, but the Orator. Does he not rise above hu-  
man Genius, whether we consider his Sentiments, his  
Expression, his Figures, or his Method and Disposi-  
tion? Insomuch that one must be a very great Man,  
I do not say to attain to his Perfections, for that is not  
possible, but barely to comprehend all his Beauties.  
He hath indeed left all others far behind him in  
Eloquence of every sort.——No Person then will  
ever dare to dispute the Prize with him, and  
Mankind ought to regard him as a God.



Y

Same



*Some DISCOURSES on the Rise  
and Progress of SCULPTURE  
and PAINTING.*

*The HISTORY of DEDALUS.*

*By Mr. L'Abbe GEDOYN \*.*

*Read to the Academy, June 10th, 1732.*

**T**HE most famous Personages in Antiquity are not now the best known: As for Example, *Dedalus*, whose Name has made so much Noise in the World, and is not now known but to a very few, who are conversant in ancient Books. To say the Truth, if on the one hand very grave Authors have taken Care to transmit his Life and Adventures to us, on the other hand to conform to the received Traditions of their Times, they have mixed with these Adventures so many Fables, and an Air of Marvelous so beyond all Probability, that they have ruined the Credit even of the Truth of

\* *Memoirs, &c. Tom. 9. p. 177.*



of the Matter ; or at least, it is not very easy to separate it from the Incredibilities with which it is confounded. This Marvelous, and these Fables, will however be an Ornament to the Subject I am to handle. The Explication I am to give of them, after so many learned Writers, will be instructive to those who are not much vers'd in Mythology ; and thus this Piece of History may be, at once, perhaps both useful and pleasing. *Diodorus Siculus* and *Pausanias* are the two Authors who give the most Particularities in the Life of *Dedalus*, and it is from them I am to take the chief Materials in this Discourse, without over-looking, however, other Testimonies.

According to *Diodorus*, *Dedalus* an *Athenian* by Birth, was Son to *Metion*, Grandson to *Eupalamus*, and great Grandson to *Erethbeus* : but according to *Plato*, *Metion* was his Father, and according to *Pausanias*, *Palamaon*. But as *Pausanias* is the only one who mentions *Palamaon*, we ought certainly to read *Eupalamus* in the Text : There is Affinity enough between the two Names to suspect a Mistake of the Copiest. The Origin of *Dedalus* being proved by the unanimous Testimony of all ancient Writers who have spoke of him, I don't see upon what Foundation *Socrates* could say this celebrated Artist was descended from *Vulcan* ; and that he himself (*Socrates*) was come from *Dedalus*. I am apt to imagine, this is said in *Plato* (s) not historically, but allegorically, and in the ironical Way, so familiar to *Socrates*. However this may be, *Dedalus* was certainly Grandson, or great Grandson to *Erethbeus*, sixth King of *Athens*. Here is then an Artist of a good Family ; nor is it surprising, for

Y 2

De-

(s) *Plato in the first Alcibiades.*

*Dedalus* liv'd in the heroick Times, when great Men had no other Ambition but to be serviceable to their Compatriots. To deliver *Greece* from the Monsters which infested it, to exterminate Robbers and Scelerates, to procure publick Repose and Safety; this was the Glory of a *Hercules* and a *Theseus*: To invent Arts, to cultivate and perfectionate them, this was the Ambition and Honour of a *Dedalus*.

From the *Deucalion* Deluge to *Dedalus*, there were, according to the common Supputation, about a hundred and fifty or sixty Years. The Arts, buried with Men in this Calamity, had not hitherto Time to rise from the Dead in *Greece*: New Inventors were necessary. Nature, which is never avaricious, furnished Materials in Abundance, but Instruments were wanting to make use of them. *Dedalus* invented the Ax and the Wimble, what the *Romans* called the *Perpendicularum*, and we the Level, Glue, and Paste, and perhaps the Saw: I say perhaps; for some ascribe the Honour of this Invention to his Nephew, and some to himself. With these Aids, being endued with a happy Genius and marvelous Dexterity, he performed Works of Sculpture and of Smith-work, which appeared then Prodigies to the *Greeks*.

*Dædalus ingenio fabræ celeberrimus artis.*

OVID. *Metam.* l. 8.

Before him, the *Grecian* Statues had their Eyes shut up, their Arms hanging, and as it were glued to the Body, the Feet joined, no Life, no Attitude or Gesture: They were for the most part square Figures without any Form,  
and

and terminating in a narrow Point. *Dedalus* gave his Statues Eyes, Feet, Hands, he put some Life and Spirit into them ; some of them seemed to move, others to give a Jerk, and some to run. And the Rumour soon spread abroad, that *Dedalus* made astonishing Statues, which were animated and marched about ; and ten Ages after, his Works were mentioned as the most surprising Effects of human Industry. This is the Idea *Plato* and *Aristotle* give us of them. According to the one in his *Politicks*, Book first, the Statues of *Dedalus* walked about ; and according to the other in his *Menon*, there were two sorts of them, one that fled from the Touch, and another that kept their Places. *Those which ran away*, says he, *were like bad Slaves, they cost less, the others were more esteemed and dearer.* All this signifies at least, that whether by secret Springs, or by Means of a little Quick-silver in the Head or Feet of the Statues, *Dedalus* had made them capable of some Motion : But after all, what was this but Children's Play, which succeeding Statuaries justly despised ? We don't find that either *Pheidias*, or *Praxiteles*, or *Lysippus*, had Recourse to such trifling Methods to make their Works admired : Such low Art is incompatible with the noble and high Aim the Artist ought to have in View, and is only fit for imposing upon raw Children. I am then persuaded, that *Dedalus* ow'd a great Share of his Reputation to the Ignorance and Rudeness of the Age in which he liv'd ; and that his Statues, of which the *Greeks* were afterwards so jealous, were chiefly valuable for their Antiquity ; for in many Things are we thus imposed upon. Besides, these first Monuments of an Art are indeed curious, and there is a real Pleasure in observing



by what Steps Sculpture had advanc'd from the most feeble Beginnings to the highest Perfection. Moreover, *Plato* himself hath given the same Judgment of *Dedalus*. Our Statuaries, said he, would expose themselves, if they should now make such Statues as those of *Dedalus*. And *Pausanias*, who had seen many of them in his Travels, acknowledges they were shocking, tho' there was something in them very surprising, and that look'd like Inspiration, considering the Time when they were done.

Mean time it can't be refused, that *Dedalus* was the Author and Founder of the *Athenian* School, which afterwards became so learned and flourishing, and was a Seminary to all *Greece* of excellent Artisans: For *Dipeone* and *Scyllis*, the first Disciples of *Dedalus*, and perhaps his Sons, had Pupils who far transcended their Masters, who were however in their Turn greatly surpassed by their own Disciples. Thus *Phidias*, *Alcamenes*, *Scopas*, *Praxiteles*, *Lysippus*, and many other famous Statuaries, descending, so to speak, from *Dedalus*, by a Sort of Filiation, *i. e.* Master after Master, in a gradual Succession from him, raised the Art to great Perfection. *Dipoene* and *Scyllis* left a great Number of Works behind them, of which we must form the same Judgment as of those by *Dedalus*. As to himself, he could not enrich his Country with many Monuments of his Art; for having committed a capital Crime, he was obliged to save himself, and to seek for Safety in a Foreign Country. Let us see what was his Crime.

He had among his Disciples his own Nephew, Son to *Perdix* his Sister. He is called by some Authors *Calus* or *Talus*, or *Attalus*, by others *Perdix*. Writers differ about his Name. This young

young Man shewed more Spirit and Industry than his Master. At the Age of twelve Years having examined the Chaps of a Serpent he had killed, and having made use of it with Success to saw a Piece of Wood, he by that Means be-  
thought himself of contriving a Saw. To him likewise is attributed the Invention of the Com-  
pafs, and of the Turning-Loom, and the Pot-  
ter's Wheel. In all Ages low Jealousy has been the Vice of Artists, even of those who make Pro-  
fession of the noblest Arts: I might bring many Instances of this without going out of *France*. *Dedalus* was not free from it; he fear'd his Pu-  
pil might efface his Glory, and to rid himself of such a Rival, who already began to obscure his Fame, he threw him from the Citadel of *Athens*, and would gladly have made it believed he had fallen by Chance; but no body credited him. *Ovid*, in the eighth Book of his *Metamorphoses*, has described the unfortunate Adventure of *Calus*, whom he chooses to call *Perdix*, probably because this Name furnished him with the Idea of the Transformation of this young Man into a Partridge: *A Bird*, says he, *that under its Feathers still retains the same Name, he formerly had, when he was in a human Form, with this Difference, that the Force and Vigour of his Mind have now re-moved into his Wings and Feet.*

*Sed vigor ingenii quondam velocis, in alas  
Inque pedes abiit: nomen quod & ante remansit.*

Let us return to *Dedalus*: So black an Action, a Murder of so horrible a Kind, could not pass unpunished in a Country, where to render Homicide more frightful, a Procefs even against inani-

mate Things was form'd, when they had been the Occasion of Death to any Man.

*Dedalus* being convicted of this Crime, was condemned to Death by the *Areopagus*. He escaped Justice by hiding himself in a little Town of *Attica*, of the Tribe of *Cecrops*, which from the Name of this famous Fugitive was called *Dadalides*: But not imagining himself safe enough there, he went into *Crete*. His Fame had prepared Way for his favourable Reception: They were charm'd to see a Person of such rare Merit; and *Minos*, who reigned in that Island, reckon'd upon making great Advantage by the Abilities of this dexterous Artist, who on his Side fully answer'd the Expectation pre-conceived of him. *Minos* had two Daughters, *Phædia* and *Ariadne*. *Dedalus* made their Statues in Wood: He likewise made a Statue of a Divinity very dear to the *Cretans*, call'd in their Language *Britomartis*, i. e. *The sweet Virgin*. 'Twas at this Time he made that Bas-relief for *Ariadne*, in white Marble, representing that Sort of Dance of which *Homer* speaks in the eighteenth Book of the *Iliad*. Till now he had been no more than Statuary; but he afterwards shew'd himself an able Architect: But it was not in all Probability, and in the Opinion of *Pliny*, till after he had made a Voyage into *Egypt*, where having considered those stupendous Pyramids, which yet continue to brave the Injuries of Time, and above all the rest, the Sepulchre or Labyrinth of King *Mandes*, an immense Work, which *Pliny* calls *Portentosissimum humani ingenii opus*, a most prodigious Effort of human Genius. Upon his Return into *Crete*, he built a Labyrinth like this, but smaller, for the Labyrinth of *Crete* was but the hundredth Part of that of *Egypt*; and it was here



here *Minos* shut up that Monster so well known by the Name of the *Minotaur*, the suitable Fruit of a Conjunction the most fantastical and shameful of any mentioned in History, or Fable. For if we may believe the Poets and the Mythologists, this *Minos*, of whom we are here speaking, Grandson to another *Minos*, who gave such sage Laws to the *Cretans*, was a very different Sort of Person from his Grandfather. He had among his Herds a Bull of extraordinary Beauty, that he loved much. According to the Custom of this Country, he ought to have first consecrated, and then sacrificed it to *Neptune*: But in the Room of this Victim, which the God of the Seas demanded, he substituted another. The God, to avenge this Impiety, inspired *Pasiphaë*, Wife to *Minos*, with a Love to this same Bull, much more wicked and abominable. *Dedalus* the Queen's Confident, willing to be subservient to the Gratification of her monstrous Passion, contrived to make a Cow of Brass, so like a real one, that *Pasiphaë* could serve her Purpose by Means of it. Hence that Monster, half Bull, half Man, which had this Labyrinth for his Pasturage, and which devoured every Year those miserable Victims the *Athenians* sent to *Minos*, by Way of Satisfaction for the Death of his Son *Androgeus*, which he perhaps unjustly imputed to them. *Minos* was sensible of a Reproach which this Affair reflected upon him, and resolved to punish the Author of it; he shut up *Dedalus* in close Prison, where he left him no other Hope, but that of having an End put to his miserable Life by Execution. *Icarus*, his Son, the Companion of his Misfortune, added considerably to it. It was then, we are told, that the ingenious *Dedalus* thought of making Wings for himself and his Son, and of fixing

fixing them to their Bodies with Wax. The Earth and Sea being inaccessible to them, in despite of Nature, they attempted to force their Way thro' the Air.

*Expertus vacuum Dædalus æra*

*Pennis non homini datis,*

says *Horace*. *Icarus* took Flight like a young Man : He forgot the wise Counsels of his Father, and soaring too high, his Wings being melted by the Heat of the Sun, he fell into a Sea, which since bears the Name of the unfortunate *Icarus*, who is now become the eternal Symbol of all those who presumptuously attempt Things above their Force. As to *Dædalus*, he being more prudent, kept lower, and so escaped into *Sicily*, and having reposed himself some time there, he went to offer his Services to *Cocalus*, who reigned in *Inyca*. *Aristotle* in his Book of *Marvels* (if that Work be his) has followed a very singular Tradition ; for he says, “ *Dædalus*, “ before going into *Sicily*, alighted in the *Electrides*, Islands in the *Adriatick* Gulf ; and “ that to leave a Memorial of his Flight and “ Misfortunes, he made two Statues, one of “ Brass, and the other of Tin, one representing “ *Icarus*, and the other himself.” *Stephanus*, under the Word *Electrides*, says the same, probably upon *Aristotle*’s Authority : But we must place this Story among the Fables with which the History of *Dædalus* is filled, Fables so gross, that they can only deceive such as are willing to be deceived. In fact, this brazen Cow of *Dædalus* is a Tale, that carries manifest Characters of Falsity in it. The *Greeks* neither knew any Thing of Brass, nor of the Art of melting that Metal,

Metal, and casting it in a Mould, till some Ages after the Siege of *Troy*. The first Founders were *Rhacus* and *Theodorus*, who liv'd in the Time of *Polycrates* Tyrant of *Samos*; thus the Fable of *Pasiphaë* could not have had Course in *Greece*, till more than five hundred Years after *Dedalus*. This Queen had taken a Fancy for *Taurus*, who, some say, was one of *Minos's* Secretaries, and others, one of his Lieutenant Generals. *Dedalus* was of Service to her Passion, he brought them together, he even lent them his House for their Rendezvous. *Pasiphaë* was brought to Bed of a Son, call'd by some Authors *Asterius* or *Asterion*, who, his Father being uncertain, was named *Minotaurus*, to signify that it could not be known whether he was Son to *Minos* or to *Taurus*. *Dedalus* being the Accomplice of *Pasiphaë* in her Intrigue, incurred the Indignation of *Minos*, and was imprisoned by him. But *Pasiphaë* found Means to get him out of Prison, and to send him away in a Ship; in which Flight *Dedalus*, to escape the King's Wrath, and the Fleet that pursued him, contrived to fix a Sail and Sail-yard to the Mast. *Icarus* embarked in another Vessel, but not knowing how to manage it, was shipwreck'd; but so luckily shipwreck'd, that his Body being found in an Island near to *Samos*, *Hercules*, who chanced to be there, took care to have him buried. See, Gentlemen, the whole Foundation of this Fable of *Pasiphaë* and of *Dedalus's* Wings. Five or six Ages afterwards, the *Greeks* were pleased to make the worst of it, and paint it in the blackest Colours. The Memory of *Minos* could not but be extremely odious to the *Athenians*, especially on account of the Tribute equally cruel and



and humbling, he had imposed upon them. They took Vengeance, according to all Appearance, upon him, by inventing this Fable, or spreading it. The Poets did not fail to take it up, being a Subject that afforded them very fine Images and Illustrations, as we may see by these Verses of *Virgil*.

*There too, in living Sculpture, might be seen  
The mad Affection of the Cretan Queen :  
Then how she cheats her bellowing Lover's Eye,  
The rushing Leap, the doubtful Progeny.  
The lower Part a Beast, a Man above,  
The Monument of their polluted Love.*

VIRG. Æn. 6.

And these following, in which he speaks of *Icarus*.

*Here hapless Icarus had found his Part,  
Had not the Father's Grief restrain'd his Art :  
He twice essay'd to cast his Son in Gold ;  
Twice from his Hands he drop'd the forming  
[Mould ;*

To say nothing of *Ovid's* ingenious Descriptions ; for in spite of some Moderns, Fable, Fiction, and the Devices of Fancy, will always be the Soul of Poetry. The pretended philosophical Spirit so much exalted by some now-a-days, may reject these Ornaments, but they will ever be very precious to great Poets ; and those who would have Reason to speak to Reason in Verse, shew, that they have neither Taste nor Talents for genuine Poetry. The innocent Lies with which *Homer*, *Virgil*, *Tasso* and *Ariosto* have adorn'd their Poems, please all those who have any Relish of true Beauty ; and they deceive no Person,

Person, because they ought to be regarded as so many Allegories or Emblems, under which lie concealed sometimes an historical Fact, and sometimes a Moral Truth. So we are told by one of the most ingenious and lively of our Poets.

*Le doux charme de maint songe,  
Par leur bel art inventé,  
Sous les habits du mensongé  
Nous offre la verité.*

But to return to the Story of *Dedalus*, which contains besides this nothing but what is simple and probable in it.

As the *Romans* imagined they made their Origin more illustrious, by deriving their Descent from the *Trojans*; so their Poets, to render some Monuments in *Italy* more memorable, have suppos'd, not without some Shadow of Truth, that *Dedalus* was the Author of them: Hence these Verses of *Virgil*, in the same sixth Book of his *Aeneid*.

*When Dedalus, to fly the Cretan Shore,  
His heavy Limbs on pointed Pinions bore,  
(The first who sail'd in Air) 'tis sung by Fame,  
To the Cumæan Coast at length he came;  
And here alighting, built this costly Frame,  
Inscrib'd to Phœbus, where he hung on high  
The Steerage of his Wings, that cut the Sky:  
Then o'er the lofty Gate his Art emboss'd  
Androgeos' Death, and Off'rings to his Ghost.*

For it is the Temple of *Apollo* at *Cumæ*, which is pointed at in this Passage: But the Authority of the *Greek* Historians is preferable to that of the *Latin* Poets, in this Point, more particularly.

ly. Now *Diodorus* and *Pausanias* tell us, ' That  
 ' *Dedalus* landed in *Sicily*, and put himself un-  
 ' der the Protection of *Cocalus* King of *Camicus*  
 ' and *Inyca*, which according to some Geogra-  
 ' phers is what is now called *Siculiano*. This  
 ' Prince received him with Humanity ; and very  
 ' soon after admitted him into his Friendship, and  
 ' treated him with great Grace and Favour, be-  
 ' ing so much the more disposed to admire his  
 ' Talents, that he reigned over a very barbarous  
 ' People. Mean time *Minos*, enraged at the Es-  
 ' cape of his Prisoner, equipp'd a Fleet to pursue  
 ' him into his Refuge ; being Master by Sea and  
 ' Land, and having a numerous Fleet, he came  
 ' to demand *Cocalus* to deliver up *Dedalus*, who  
 ' not being able to make Resistance to so power-  
 ' ful an Enemy, took the safer Course, and in-  
 ' vited him to his Palace, in order to try to sof-  
 ' ten him by the most officious Civilities : But  
 ' the Daughters of *Cocalus*, being yet more  
 ' touched by the Merit of *Dedalus*, contrived a  
 ' Way to save his Life at the Expence of that  
 ' of *Minos*. One Day when this Prince was in the  
 ' Bath, they caused to be given him Water so warm  
 ' that it suffocated him. His Death passed for  
 ' a natural Accident ; *Cocalus* delivered his Body  
 ' to the *Cretans*, who returned into their Island,  
 ' and there was no more of it. *Dedalus* deliver-  
 ' ed from this Persecution, thought now no more  
 ' of any Thing, but shewing his Gratitude to his  
 ' Rescuer : He built a Fortrefs upon the Top  
 ' of a high Mountain, very steep, and so difficult  
 ' of Access, that a handful of Men could defend  
 ' it against a whole Army. There *Cocalus* built  
 ' a Palace, and retired with all his Treasures.  
*Diodorus* makes mention of many other Works  
 done



done by *Dedalus* in this little Canton of *Sicily*, some of which were still subsisting in his Time; among others, of a sort of *Bason* or *Reservoir*, from which sprung a *River*, that emptied itself into the *Sea*. Mount *Eryx*, famous for the Temple of *Venus Erycina*, was extremely rugged and dangerous, the Inconveniency of the Situation extremely cool'd the Devotion of the People: *Dedalus* surrounded this Mountain with a Wall, then he made a large part of it plain, and thus the Temple of the Goddess became more frequented. 'Tis probable that many other *Italian* Princes employed *Dedalus* in several Works. About this Time *Iolas*, Nephew to *Hercules*, Head of a *Greek* Colony, led it into *Sardinia*; he was not long before he heard *Dedalus* was in his Neighbourhood: He sent immediately to entreat him to come to see him; and we may easily guess, of what Use a Person must have been to this Prince in his new Settlement, who was at the same Time Engineer, Statuary and Architect. Some Authors pretend, that *Aristeus*, Head of another *Grecian* Colony, had the same Advantage; but they are mistaken: *Pausanias* has well remarked, that the Times do not hit; *I can't be persuaded* (o), says he, *that Aristeus, who had espoused Autonoe, Daughter to Cadmus, was assisted by Dedalus in any Undertaking, for he lived when Oedipus reigned at Thebes.*

This, Gentlemen, is almost all I have been able to collect from ancient Monuments concerning *Dedalus*. He left a Son behind him called *Japys*, who gave Name to another Country in *Italy*. No Writer has mentioned the Time of *Dedalus's* Death; and the Silence of the *Greek* Historians in this Article, is a Proof that they knew

(o) *Pausanias in his Phocidis, cap. 17.*

knew nothing of it, which induces me to think that he went again into *Egypt*, and ended his Days there. It can hardly be called in Question, when we consider that *Diodorus Siculus* says, *Dedalus*, in *Quality of Architect*, built the *Vestible* of that magnificent Temple of *Vulcan* at *Memphis*; and that there was placed in it his own Statue done by himself; and that in an *Island* near this City, the *Egyptians* built and consecrated a Temple to him, in which they rendered him divine Honours. With regard to the *Greeks*, their Veneration for *Dedalus* went not so far; and *Junius* is grossly mistaken, when he speaks of great and little *Dedalian* Festivals, as instituted to the Honour of this Statuary: These Honours were paid to *Juno*; and these Festivals were called so, not on account of the Statuary, but because anciently, and that long before his Time, every polished and curiously wrought Piece of Wood was called *Δαιδαλον*, and hence he himself took that Name.

Besides this, it is necessary to take Notice, that there were three *Dedali*, or three Statuaries: The first an *Athenian*, whose History I have been now giving: The Second a *Sicyonian*, who enriched *Greece* with a great Number of Statues: And the Third of *Bithynia*, of whom *Arrian* speaks, who was famous for his Statue of *Jupiter Stretius*, or God of Armies. The *Greeks* have often confounded these three, either ignorantly, or rather out of Envy, to give more Renown to their ancient Monuments, by making them older than they were. And *Pausanias* himself hath sometimes fallen into this Mistake, as I have had Occasion to remark in my Observations on that Author. To avoid this Error we must remember,

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ber, that the more ancient *Dedalus* lived in the Time of *Hercules*, *Theseus*, and *Oedipus*, about thirty or forty Years before the Trojan War.



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## *The* HISTORY of PHIDIAS.

By Mr. L'Abbé GEDOYN.

*Read to the Academy of Literature, March 3d,  
1733\*.*

THE History of *Dedalus*, I read to this Academy some Time ago, naturally leads me to that of *Phidias*. In the former Discourse you have seen the Commencement of this admirable Art, which gives Life to Marble and Brass, and the Productions of which are so durable: In this you shall see the same Art carried to its highest Perfection. 'Tis now no longer an ignorant People admiring uncommon Figures, but without Taste; or little Automata, *i. e.* Playthings for Children, small Statues, which by the Help of a hidden Spring seem'd to move of themselves: 'Tis now a polite and learned Nation, accustomed to the Great and Beautiful, that puts Marks of Distinction upon an excellent Artist. For *Phidias* did not owe, as *Dedalus*, his Reputation

\* Memoirs, &c. T. 9. p. 189.

tation to the Ignorance of the Age he liv'd in. We do not indeed precisely know in what Year he was born, but we are certainly informed that he flourished in the 83d Olympiad, *i. e.* about the 300th Year of Rome. He was an *Athenian* by Birth, Son to *Charmidas*, and not *Charminus*; as we read in *Strabo* by the Error of the Copiests. He had for his Masters *Eladas* of *Argos*, and *Hippias*, both more famous for having had such a Disciple, than by their own Works. *Pliny* in the thirty-fourth Book of his *Natural History*, and the eighth Chapter, tells us, that *Phidias* had for Cotemporaries many celebrated Statuaries who were his Rivals, among whom was *Alcamenes*, *Critias*, *Nestocles*, and *Hegias*. But it is worth while to observe in passing, that there is a considerable Error here in *Pliny*, which the learned *Hardouin* hath not taken Notice of. He says roundly, *that the Statuary Nestocles was one he knew nothing about*. But he might have learned from *Lucian*, that we ought to read here instead of *Critias* and *Nestocles*, *Critias Nestotes*, without any Stop. This Statuary was called *Nestotes*, *i. e.* the *Islander*, to distinguish him from another *Critias* of *Albens*, who was likewise a Statuary. *Pliny* adds, *That Phidias was the first who found out the Art of Turning with Taste, and that Polycletus brought this Art to its highest Perfection*. I fancy he means no more, but that the Works of *Polycletus* were more finished, more exquisitely polished, or more elegant. Accordingly *Phidias* excell'd chiefly in representing Gods, because these Statues did not require Elegance and Delicacy, but rather Grandeur, Dignity and Majesty; Qualities which constituted the peculiar Excellence of *Phidias*. Besides, we may call this pretended Superiority of *Polycletus* in small

Works into doubt, if it be allowable to oppose Testimony to Testimony ; for *Phidias* had made a Bee in Brass, a Grasshopper, and a Fly, which are extremely commended (a). We may likewise take Advantage in his Favour of an Epigram in *Martial*, in which he ascribes to him little Fishes that seemed only to want Water, in order to swim.

*Artis Phidiacæ toreuma clarum*

*Pisces aspicias : adde aquam natabunt.*

But to say the Truth, I imagine we are here to understand by *Artis Phidiacæ toreuma clarum*, the Art in general, and not *Phidias's* Hand in particular. However that be, this famous Statuary appeared in a Time which was proper for displaying his marvelous Talents. *Greece*, after having been threaten'd with an Invasion from the *Persians*, began to have some Respite : She was miraculously saved, or rather saved by those extraordinary Strokes of Fortune, of which there are Instances in all Governments. Peace had then succeeded to a formidable War, which interested the whole Body of the *Greeks*. Plenty, the Daughter of Peace, and the Mother of ingenious Arts, of those more especially which have Pleasure for their Object, disclosed several Talents, which when they were united by one Person in one Design, could not but contribute to the Splendor of the State. *Pericles*, whose many admirable Qualities are so well known, then govern'd the Republick of *Athens* ; and his sole Ambition was to render that City the most glorious and magnificent one in the World. He first thought of making Commerce flourish, which is the Soul of

(a) *Jul. Imperator, Ep. 8.*



of a State. Instantly the *Athenians* had three hundred Gallies, which were their principal Security, and many of which were incessantly bringing to them great Riches from the *Indies*, Gold, Silver, Ivory. There was in the Temple of *Apollo* at *Delos* a very rich Treasure ramass'd by the Contributions of all the different States and Countries in *Greece*; and which they look'd upon as a Resource in the pressing Needs of the Nation.

*Pericles*, under the Pretext of the great Services the *Athenians* had rendered to the *Greeks*, made this Treasure be transported to *Athens*, not to appropriate it to himself (he always kept his Hands clean) but to employ a Part of it upon publick Buildings, to embellish *Athens*, and render that City as it were the Eye and the Light of *Greece*. He undertook to build what was called afterwards the great Wall, the Temple of *Minerva*, called *Parthenion*, a Theatre for Musick, and those magnificent Porches known since by the Name of *Propylæa*, immense Works, which demanded an Age to accomplish them, the greater Part of which were however finished in five Years: For the Workmen of all Sorts, who without him would have languish'd in Obscurity, strove with Emulation to outdo one another, and seconded his Taste and Zeal with wonderful Alacrity. He had for Architects *Ictinus* and *Callicrates*; and for Painters *Panamus*, *Plisstenetes*, *Parrhasius* and *Zeuxes*; and for Engraver the famous *Mys*; and for Sculptor *Phidias*, in whose Hands the Gold, Silver, and Ivory, took any Form he pleas'd. *Phidias* was not one of those Artists, who only knew how to manage the Instruments of their Art: He had a Mind adorned with Knowledge of every Kind,

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that could be useful to a Man of his Profession. He had studied the History, the Poetry, the Religion of his Country, and even those Traditions which we very properly call Fables. He was acquainted with all those Things, and besides this with Opticks and Geometry, the Knowledge of which it seems alone was sufficient to raise him above all the other Statuaries. Several Instances of his Skill in these Arts are told, which it is not improper to take Notice of here. One Day upon shewing him a Lion's Nail, at the Sight of it he concluded what the Size of the Animal must have been; and hence the Proverb, *En ungue leonem.* *Alcarnenes* and he were commanded to make each a Statue of *Minerva*, that the most beautiful of the two might be plac'd upon a very high Pillar. The Statues were made, and expos'd to the Judgment of the Publick. The *Minerva* of *Alcarnenes* appears exceeding beautiful, when it was seen near, and was preferred by the universal Voice to all the rest. The *Minerva* of *Phidias*, on the contrary, at so little a Distance from the Eye seem'd hideous; it had a large gaping Mouth, Nostrils which appear'd to shrink and be drawn back; and had I know not what Coarseness of Features in the Face: *Phidias* was laugh'd at, and his Work despis'd. Place it, said he, *where it is designed to be put.* They did: And the admir'd Statue of *Alcarnenes* appear'd nothing at all; whereas that of *Phidias* struck with an Air of Grandeur and Majesty, that they could not enough gaze at and admire. Upon which the Approbation was given maturely to *Phidias*, which his Rival had surpris'd; and the poor *Alcarnenes* retir'd ashamed and confounded: Not

Not but *Alcamenes* was an excellent Sculptor, but he was not acquainted with the Rules of Opticks.

Sculpture, or to speak less equivocally, the Art of Statuary, had begun in *Greece* almost with the *Olympiads*. There were some Statues of *Dipoeni* and *Scyllis*, famous *Cretan* Artists, who had, according to *Pliny* and *Pausanias*, *Dedalus* for their Master, which were preserved in *Greece* with great Veneration, as very precious Relicks. Some Works of *Byzes*, of *Anthermus*, of *Bupalus*, and of other ancient Sculptors, were likewise carefully kept. Yet, to say Truth, those Statues had more Merit on account of their Antiquity, than their Workmanship. *Phidias* was the first who gave the *Greeks* a good Taste of beautiful-Nature, and taught them to imitate it. What is astonishing, is not that he made admirable Statues, but that he made so many. For in the Temple of *Apollo* at *Delphos*, round a Brass Horse, done in Imitation of the *Trojan* Horse, were placed an *Apollo*, a *Diana*, and ten or twelve Statues of *Greek* Heroes, all of Brass, and of his Chizzel. Add to this his *Venus Urania*, his *Rhea*, his *Apollo Parthenopius*, a *Minerva* in Marble, he had made for the *Thebans*, the Goddess *Nemesis* cut out of the same Block of Marble, which the *Persians*, thinking themselves sure of Victory, had embarked at *Marathon*, to make a Trophy of it; a Statue of *Pericles*, one representing the young *Pantarcus*, which in all Probability was none of the worst, four *Minerva's* of a prodigious Size, one in Brass called *Minerva Polyades*, of such a Height, that the Plume of her Head-piece, and the Point of her Spear, were seen at the Distance of four Leagues; another the *Lemnian Minerva*, in Brass likewise,



which is represented by some to have been his Master-piece, and was so called, because the Inhabitants of *Lemnos* had consecrated it to this Goddess in one of her Temples at *Athens*: The third of Gold and Ivory, for the Inhabitants of *Pellene*: The fourth of Marble, for the *Platæans*: Without reckoning his *Minerva* of *Athens*, and his *Olympian Jupiter*, which I shall mention afterwards. We must then allow, that this illustrious Artist is perhaps the only one who wrought with so much Facility and Perfection at the same Time. For we must either give up all ancient Records, or agree that nothing came from his Hands that was not exceeding beautiful. When *Cicero* would give a high Idea of *Hortensius*, he said, *This Orator, from his Infancy, was like the Statues of Phidias, he no sooner appeared than he was liked and admired.* I have said, that his Talent principally lay in representing Gods, and according to *Cicero* he did not seek for their Features and Likenesses in any visible Objects; but by the Strength of his Genius he had formed to himself an Idea of true Beauty, which he had ever present to his Mind, and made his Rule and Model. Accordingly *Pericles*, who had more Confidence in him than in all the other Architects and Artists he employed, made him Inspector and Director of his Works, and as it were Intendant or Supervisor of all the publick Buildings at *Athens*. When the *Parthenion* was finished, that magnificent Temple of *Minerva*, some Remains of which to this Day charm Travellers, he thought of consecrating it, which Ceremony consisted in placing a Statue of the Goddess in it. This Work was committed to *Phidias*, and it was in this he out-did himself: He

He made a Statue of Gold and Ivory of twenty-five Cubits in Height ; the *Athenians* would have it of Ivory, because then Ivory was more esteemed than the finest Marble. But however rich or precious the Materials were, the Art infinitely surpassed them. *Phidias* had engraved upon the Convex Part of *Minerva's* Buckler, the Battle of the *Athenians* against the *Amazons* ; and upon the Concave Side the Rebellion of the Giants against the Gods. Upon her Buskins the Conflict of the *Centaurs* with the *Lapithæ* ; and upon the Pedestal the Birth of *Pandora* and her whole History. *Cicero*, *Pliny*, *Plutarch*, *Pausanias*, and many other renowned Writers among the Ancients, all Men of good Taste, have spoken of this Statue, as ocular Witnesses of its Perfection. Upon their Testimony therefore we cannot doubt but it must have been one of the most stupendous and noble Pieces of Art that ever was produced. We may easily judge what Glory *Phidias* must have acquired by such Success : But this so much boasted of Work was fatal to its Author. What *Horace* says of the Envy that pursues Virtue is true in every Country, but it was particularly verified at *Athens*. *Virtutem incolumen odimis ; sublatam ex oculis querimus invidi*. A great Superiority of Merit, in whatever Kind, did not long please the *Athenians* : *Themistocles*, *Miltiades*, *Alcibiades*, *Socrates*, *Demosthenes*, are so many Proofs of it. *Phidias* likewise experienc'd this Envy : The Brightness of his Reputation, and the Favour of *Pericles* brought the Invidious upon him, a sort of Enemies more hidden than others, but on that very Account more dangerous : Besides, the *Athenians* began to be tired of the soft and mild

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Government of *Pericles*. The imaginary Advantages of a Change are often prefer'd to the real Goods of the present Administration. They had a Mind therefore to try, by an Experiment upon the Person of *Pbidias*, the Disposition the People were in with regard to *Pericles* himself; and they were willing to destroy the Favourite, in order to humble his Patron.

Some affirm, says *Plutarch*, that *Pbidias* had put his Name upon the Pedestal of his *Minerva* at *Athens*. This Circumstance is not mentioned by *Pausanias*; and it is expressly contradicted by *Cicero*, who says positively, in the first Book of his *Tusculan Questions*, that *Phidias* not having the Liberty to put his Name upon the Statue of *Minerva*, had carved his Portrait upon the Buckler of this Goddess. *Plutarch* adds, That *Phidias* had pictured himself in the Figure of an old bald Man, lifting a huge, heavy Stone with both his Hands; and that he had likewise represented *Pericles* fighting against an Amazon; but in such an Attitude, that the Hand which he stretched to throw a Javelin, hid a Part of his Face. His doing these two Portraits, which in reality shocked the Truth of the History, was made a Crime; and they did not stop there.

*Menon*, one of his Pupils, demanded a Hearing, and accused him of having embezzled a Part of the Gold intended for the Statue of *Minerva*. *Pericles* had had a Pre-sentiment this would be said; and therefore by his Advice *Pbidias* had applied the Gold to the *Minerva* in such a Way, that it could easily be taken off and weighed. This was done; and to the Shame of the Accuser, the whole forty and four Talents of Gold were found to be there.

*Pbidias*



*Phidias* was likewise suspected of having allured to his House the finest Women in *Athens*, to give *Pericles* an Opportunity of seeing them the more conveniently ; and in truth, this Suspicion was not altogether groundless. *Aspasia*, *Pericles*'s famous Mistress, and afterwards his Wife, was become old, and *Pericles* in an advanc'd Age had yet the Inclinations of Youth. However that may be, *Phidias*'s Delator was rewarded, and *Phidias* himself was cast into Prison, where he died of some Disease, say certain Writers, and by Poison say others. For my Part, I give more Credit to an ancient Scholiast upon *Aristophanes*, quoted by *Meursius* (b), who says, that *Phidias* seeing himself in Danger, made his Escape, and retired into *Elis*. This seems to me the more probable, because the *Olympian Jupiter* of *Phidias* was certainly posterior to his *Minerva*. It is very likely, that being piqued against the *Athenians*, he resolved to revenge himself of the Affront done to him, and that animated by Resentment, he employed all his Art to make a Statue for the *Eleans*, that should eclipse the *Minerva* which the *Athenians* looked upon as his Master-piece. He succeeded ; his *Olympian Jupiter* was a Prodigy of Art ; so great a Prodigy, that to put a just Value upon it, it was thought necessary to rank it in the Number of the *Seven Marvels of the World*. This Statue of Gold and Ivory, sixteen Foot high, and of a proportioned Bulk, hath put all the Statuaries who came after him to despair : None of them ever had the Presumption to think so much as of imitating it. So *Pliny* tells us. According to *Quintilian*, the Majesty of this Statue equalled that of the God it represented, and struck Be-  
holders,

(b) Meursii Archont. Athen. l. 3. c. 4.

holders with religious Veneration. The *Greeks* and *Romans* reckoned it a Misfortune to die without having seen this Marvelous Work. *We go to see the Olympian Jove of Phidias, and every one looks upon it as a Misfortune to die unacquainted with these great Works, says Epictetus in Arrian.* Those who saw it, seized with Astonishment, ask'd how the Statuary was able thus to set out *Jupiter* with all his Divine Majesty. Did the God come down from Heaven to shew himself to *Phidias*, or was *Phidias* carried up to Heaven to see the God?

*Jupiter ad terras, an ad æthera Phidia venit,  
Ut viso fierit talis imago Deo?*

So *Grotius* translates a *Greek Epigram* in the Fourth Book of the *Anthologia*. But *Phidias* himself being ask'd whence he took his Idea of *Jupiter*, answer'd this Question by repeating these charming Verses of *Homer*.

*He spoke, and awful bends his sable Brows;  
Shakes his ambrosial Curls, and gives the Nod,  
The Stamp of Fate, and Sanction of the God.  
High Heav'n with trembling the dread Signal  
And all Olympus to the Centre shook. [took,*

*Iliad. B. I. v. 682. Mr. POPE's  
Translation.*

Thus giving to understand, that it was *Homer's* Genius which had inspired him. In fact, the *Jupiter* was represented sitting, his Head touched the Ceiling of the Temple; and it seemed, that if the God should but move himself in the least, he would shake the Building from its  
Foun-

Foundations. *Pausanias*, who had seen this Statue, and carefully examined it, has left us a Description of it, which is curious, because it is the only one we have preserved to us of it; not to mention what we may learn from it with respect to the religious Zeal of a People plunged in the Darkness of Paganism, and to what Expences they chearfully went in decorating their Temples and Divinities.

“ The God, *says this Author*, is seated upon  
 “ a Throne; he is of Gold mix’d with Ivory,  
 “ and has upon his Head a Crown of Olives. In  
 “ his right Hand he holds a *Victory*, which is  
 “ also of Gold and Ivory, crown’d and adorn’d  
 “ with Fillets: In his Left a Sceptre wrought  
 “ with the nicest Delicacy, in which all sorts of  
 “ Metals glister. The Bird that rests on the Ex-  
 “ tremity of his Sceptre is an Eagle. The Bus-  
 “ kins and the Mantle of the God are also of  
 “ Gold; and upon the Mantle are engraved all  
 “ Kinds of Animals, Flowers of all sorts, Lilies  
 “ in particular. The Throne shines with Gold  
 “ and precious Stones; Ivory blended with Ebo-  
 “ ny make a most agreeable Variety; upon it are  
 “ painted several Animals and other Ornaments.  
 “ At the four Corners are four *Victories*, which  
 “ give one another the Hand, in order to lead  
 “ up a Dance; and there are two other *Victories*  
 “ at his Feet. The Feet of the Throne are a-  
 “ dorned on the Inside with Sphynx’s, which  
 “ tear Infants from the Bosoms of their *Theban*  
 “ Mothers; and under them are *Apollo* and  
 “ *Diana* killing *Niobe’s* Children with their Ar-  
 “ rows. Between the Feet of the Throne there  
 “ run four cross Bars from one End to the other.  
 “ The



“ The first which we see in entering is adorned  
 “ with seven Figures ; there was an eighth, but  
 “ we know not what became of it. These Fi-  
 “ gures represent the ancient *Olympick Games*.  
 “ Upon the other cross Beams there is *Hercules*  
 “ ready to engage the *Amazons* : The Comba-  
 “ tants on one Side and the other are twenty-  
 “ nine in Number, and *Theseus* is very distin-  
 “ guishable amongst the Companions of *Hercules*.  
 “ The Throne is not supported by these Feet  
 “ only ; but there are at equal Distances Pillars  
 “ of the same Height, upon which the Throne  
 “ stands. Upon the higher Part of the Throne,  
 “ above *Jupiter's* Head, *Phidias* has plac'd the  
 “ three *Graces* on one side, and on the other the  
 “ three *Hours* : Upon the Base, under the God's  
 “ Feet are gilded Lions, and a Representation of  
 “ the Combat of *Theseus* with the *Amazons*. The  
 “ Pedestal, which supports all this Mass, is en-  
 “ riched with divers Ornaments, which exceed-  
 “ ingly set off the Statue. *Phidias* has engraved  
 “ there upon Gold, on one Side the Sun con-  
 “ ducting his Car, and on the other *Jupiter* and  
 “ *Juno* ; by *Jupiter* are the *Graces*, among  
 “ whom is *Minerva*, and next to her *Vesta*.  
 “ *Venus* seems to come out of the Sea, and she  
 “ is received by the God of Love, and carried  
 “ by the Goddess *Pitbo*, &c.

“ I know, continues this Author, that many  
 “ have given the Dimensions of this Sta-  
 “ tue, but we must not depend upon them ;  
 “ for the Height and Breadth are far above  
 “ their Estimation to judge of them by the  
 “ Eye.”

This astonishing Work compleated the Glory  
 of *Phidias*, and hath secured to him a Repr-  
 tation

tation Two Thousand Years have not been able to rob him of. It was by this Master-piece of Workmanship, that he finished his Labours. A long Time after he was gone, his Working-House and Utenfils were preserved, and Travellers went to see them. He had two Brothers *Pananus* and *Plistenete*, both excellent Painters. His chief Scholars were *Alcarnenes*, *Agoracites*, and *Colotes*. The *Eleans*, to do Honour to his Memory, created in Favour of his Descendants an Office, which consisted solely in keeping this magnificent Statue clean and proper. The Persons charged with this Care were called *καὶ δ' ὀφθαλμοὶ*, from a Word which signifies to furbish or make bright. They begun with offering a Sacrifice to *Minerva Ergane*, and then they went about their Work.

*Pausanias* remarks, that at *Jupiter's* Feet upon the Base there was this Inscription: *Phidias, Son of Charmenides, Athenian, made me.* Whence we may judge, that what was forbid at *Athens*, was not at *Olympia*: Nor do I believe it was any where else in *Greece*. In fact, I find by reading this Traveller, that almost all the Statues with which the Forest sacred to *Jupiter* at *Olympia* was adorned, and the greater Number of those he mentions, bore the Name of their Authors. As therefore of all the Statues preserved to our Time, which are dispers'd thro' *Europe*, whether at *Rome*, in the Palace of the Grand Duke of *Tuscany*, or in *France*, there are not, I think, above two or three which have the Workman's Name upon them; however estimable the others may be, I am inclined to fancy, that they are not of the best Age in *Greece* for Sculpture, but of that Time when the *Greeks* came first to exercise their Art at *Rome*, i. e. towards the End of the *Roman* Republick, or under the first Emperors. A



*A DISCOURSE upon the Anti-  
quity of PAINTING.*

By *Mr. L'Abbe FRAQUIER.*

*Read to the Academy of Literature, November  
14th, 1732\*.*

**A**LL who undertake to discourse of any Art, commonly begin by searching into its Origin. Good Order requires they should. For besides its being a Satisfaction to a curious Mind to discover the Beginning and Rise of any remarkable Thing, this Knowledge casts a considerable Light upon the Subject one would illustrate, and serves to ascertain its real Value.

By proceeding in this Manner, *Abbé Fraquier* propos'd to give some additional Reputation to an Art, which is in itself full of Charms, *viz.* Painting, upon the Antiquity of which he read a Dissertation to this Society in the Year 1709, which is quoted by *Madam Dacier*, in her Notes upon the third Book of *Homer's Iliad* with great Encomiums.

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\* *Memoirs*, Tom. 1. p. 75.



It is morally true, that the more ancient an Art is, the more excellent it is, whether we place Excellence in Congruity and Connexion with Nature, of which every Art is an Imitation, and as it were a Supplement; or whether this Relation and Proportion regards the Necessities of Life, or hath Pleasure only for its Object and Scope. For it can't be doubted, that Nature is of itself propense towards all Things which are qualified to be of use to us, or to give us Pleasure; and that with more or less Promptitude and Ardor, in Proportion to the Need we have of the thing, or the Greatness of the Pleasures we receive from it. As from the Necessity of Things to human Use, or from the Pleasure they afford, we may almost with Certainty determine concerning their Antiquity; so on the other hand when we find any Usage to have been very ancient, we may reasonably conclude, that this Practice is very suitable to the natural Dispositions of Mankind; and that it is either very necessary to their Happiness, or very agreeable to them.

'Tis, methinks, in the latter Class of Things that we must place Painting, *i. e.* amongst the Things purely agreeable; since this Art having no Connexion with what are called the Necessaries of Life, hath Entertainment to the Eye and the Imagination for its sole Aim. The Satisfaction arising from Imitation, and from a Kind of Reproduction and Multiplication of the same Objects, hath its Foundation in the Frame of our Minds, but yet it is not easy to develop this Source. Perhaps it hath in some Measure a Connexion with that secret and so natural a Desire of Immortality, which Divine Providence hath so deeply inlaid and wrought into our

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Minds,

Minds, and not in human Minds only, but in all Beings capable of Reflexion.

Poetry, the Daughter of Pleasure, as well as Painting, has like the latter, no other Object but Pleasure. If, in Progress of Time, Virtue hath borrowed the Charms of both, in order to make a sweeter and more lively Impression upon our Hearts, a *Juno* did the Girdle of *Venus*, that she might appear the more amiable in *Jupiter's* Eyes; if Virtue hath thus ennobled and rais'd the Value of Poetry and Painting, 'tis a Benefit the two Arts owe to her, and which they are in themselves absolute Strangers to.

They have both the same Object, of themselves they aim at no more than pleasing. 'Tis not Necessity which gave Birth to them. They do not owe their Origin to it; unless it be in this Respect, that the Desire of Pleasure is no less powerful in our Minds, than what is called Desire or Want in a less noble, but more precise Acceptation of that Word. And it is in this View, no doubt, that in *Plato's* Banquet, *Socrates* gives Indigence for the Mother of Love.

This Resemblance, this evident Association between Painting and Poetry, naturally led our Author to enquire, in passing, which of the two Sisters is the eldest. For it is agreed that they are Sisters. Their Scope is the same: The Means they employ to accomplish their Ends are the same, or only differ with respect to their Object. If the one paints to the Eyes, and by the Eyes opens its Way into the Imagination to please and charm it; the other paints immediately to the Fancy, and so possesses it with the agreeable Impression it makes upon it, that this Impression passes even to our Senses, and makes us think we see what we only imagine. But  
Painting

Painting attracts and seizes the Mind by Means of our Senses; and this is perhaps the surest Way of taking hold of it. It employs a Sense, the Perception of which is most ready and lively; and by this Means, from the Moment it presents itself, its Effect is accomplished. The Effect of Poetry is slower and less general. An exquisite Piece of Painting pleases every body. The Brutes themselves are sensible to its Charms in their Manner of being affected: Every thing that has Eyes is touched by it: Whereas Poetry having no other Charms but those which lie in Words, it can only affect those among Men who have most Spirit; and withal, a perfect Acquaintance with the Language it employs.

But which of these Sisters is eldest? and in the Obscurity of the remote Times when they had Birth, what sure Method can we take to get at the certain Knowledge of their Origin, in order to give the Precedency to one or other of them? Since ancient Monuments do not inform us, we must in some Manner go back to the most unknown Times, and consider Mankind in the State they were, when they first began to make Reflexions, and to supply by the Invention of Arts, what was wanting to their Happiness. 'Tis a Liberty we cannot be refused in Researches of this Kind, the Consequences of which do not concern essential Matters, since those who treat of Laws and Politicks, begin with considering Mankind before the mutual Engagements which restrained their Liberty, and subjected them to the Yoke of Laws. Let us use the same Right in a Question of less Importance; and in which there is much less Danger, if we should mistake.



The first State of Mankind continued so short a while, that we may regard the early Ages of the World as a Period of Ignorance, and the Reign of Barbarity. Man knew not the Excellence of his Nature, and without employing that Divine Part of himself, the Excellence of which in some sort equals him to the Divinity, he attended to nothing but his Conservation. His Thoughts did not extend far beyond the mere Necessities of his Body. The Poets, whose Art embellishes every thing, have converted those Days of gross Darkness into Times of Innocence and Happiness. They have made their *Golden Age* of it. But to return to simple Truth, there is great Probability that Men, who, according to them, eat Acorns, were not yet many Removes above the other groveling Animals. In this Condition Man, who is born an Imitator, and in whom the Inclination to imitate is not perhaps a Virtue, was naturally prompted to Imitation. Every thing in him fortified this Propensity. Ignorance itself corroborated it, as it yet does in Children and Persons of very little Discernment or Penetration. Every Object of their Sight seemed to invite to the Pleasure of Imitation; and Nature herself, who by Means of Light and Shade, paints all Things, either in Water, or the Surfaces of polished Bodies, taught Man how to satisfy his natural Desire of imitating. He procured a double Satisfaction to himself by the same Imitations, because by imitating and re-tracing Objects, he likewise imitated Nature herself, who re-traces and imitates them in several different Ways. Thus the Sun, which *Plato* most ingeniously calls the ablest of Painters, taught Men the first Rudiments of Painting. Such very probably was the

the first Dawn of this Art. For we need not stop long to examine certain Facts, which are commonly told in speaking of the Origin of Painting. It is said, for Example, *That a Shepherdess, to preserve the Portrait of her Lover, followed with the Point of her Crook the Lines of his Shadow upon the Sand, and thus marked his Image.* And there are a thousand such like little Stories imagined at Pleasure, and which true or false serve to confirm what we have been saying, being only particular Applications of a general Principle, and as it were Apologues invented for the Explication of a Truth.

If these Reflexions are not without Foundation, we may conclude with the same Degree of Certainty, that Painting is more ancient than Poetry her Sister, and must have long had the Start of her. For according to the preceding Reasoning, which is wholly founded in Nature, Imitation by Light and Shade, (nay even that which is done by Strokes or Lines, whether they are coloured or not) must have preceded those Lines and Characters which are used to express and mark, as it were, the several Inflexions of the Voice, and thus to form Writing, which must have been found out before Poetry. Some Attempt was certainly made to paint Bodies, or to represent them by Imitation, before Men thought of representing by Strokes, and of painting (so to speak) Thoughts and Sentiments. Nature observes the same Order in all she does. She begins by what is easiest and less precious. There she even stops a long Time, before she goes forward to what is more precious and difficult: We may therefore pronounce in Favour of Painting. We may give it the Precedence of Poetry. But this Precedence is only due to

Painting, as it often happens in great Families, on account of its Antiquity ; because Poetry must necessarily have been the Fruit of Politeness cultivated by the Art of Writing: Whereas Painting might have had, and probably had its Birth amidst Barbarity, in the Times when Men had not yet thought either of Writing or Politeness.

But this is enough, and perhaps too much with respect to a Thing in which we cannot attain to historical Certainty. To proceed to something more precise and determined, with regard to the Antiquity of Painting, Mr. *L'Abbé Fraquier* endeavours to find out what we can learn concerning it from the most ancient of Books. By the most ancient of profane Writings he understands the two Poems of *Homer*, which are so rich, said he, that if we would study them with due care, we should find they are sufficient to instruct us in the Religion, the Politicks of States, the *Politique* of Towns, Family Oeconomy, the Arts, those of War, as well as those of Peace in his Time. When we are very young, continues he, we only admire his Poetry; but when Age and Conversance with Letters have turned our Minds toward more serious Thoughts, and made us fond of the Solid than the Shining, then we begin to discover an exhaustless Fund of Riches in them, and we, in some Measure, regret as lost, all the Time we had bestow'd upon *Homer*, merely as a Poet, without considering him as an Historian: Besides, when he speaks of *Homer* as the most ancient of profane Writers, he does not pretend to enter into any Contest with those who think *Hesiod* liv'd before him. He knew what may be said on this Subject. He was likewise aware, that we may derive very great Light from the sacred Wri-



Writings. But he propos'd to restrict himself to *Homer*, and to discover from his Works, if Painting was in use in his Time, whether *Homer* liv'd a few Years before the Siege of *Troy*, the principal Events of which he sung, or a long Time after. It is hardly necessary to apprize the Reader, that under the general Term of Painting, the Author comprehends the Art of Designing and Colouring: For if Design be the Soul of Painting, Colouring is its Body.

According to *Pliny*, at the Siege of *Troy*, Engraving was in use: But he seems to think that Painting was not then known. Upon this Principle he wonders, how an Art which began so late, could have come in so short a Time to so high a Degree of Perfection. We do not stand in Need of *Pliny* to be assured (d), that Engraving and Sculpture were practis'd when the *Greeks* besieg'd *Troy*, We can't doubt of it, provided we give any Attention to that vast Number of engraved Works and Sculptures described by *Homer*. Such is the Statue of *Minerva*, upon the Knees of which the *Trojan* Dames, by *Hector's* Orders plac'd a precious Veil, which they devoted to her to obtain her Favour. It is described in the sixth Book of the *Iliad*.

*You, with your Matrons go! a spotless Train,  
And burn rich Odours in Minerva's Fane,  
The largest Mantle your full Wardrobes bold,  
Most priz'd for Art, and labour'd o'er with Gold.--  
The Phrygian Queen to her rich Wardrobe went,  
Where treasur'd Odours breath'd a softly Scent,  
There lay the Vestures of no vulgar Art,  
Sidonian Maids embroider'd ev'ry part.  
Here, as the Queen revolv'd with careful Eyes,  
The various Tinctures and the various Dyes,*

A a 4

She

(d) *Plin. lib. 35.*

*She chose a Veil that shone superior far,  
 And glow'd refulgent as the Morning Star,  
 Herself with this the long Procession leads ;  
 The Train majestically slow proceeds. —  
 With Hands uplifting and imploring Eyes,  
 They fill the Dome with supplicating Cries.  
 The Priestess then the shining Veil displays,  
 Plac'd on Minerva's Knees, and thus she prays.*

This Procession of the Trojan Matrons to the Temple of Minerva, Virgil has introduced among the Pictures at Carthage, in the first Book of his *Æneid*.

*Meantime the Trojan Dames oppress'd with Wo,  
 To Pallas' Fane in long Procession go,  
 In hopes to reconcile their heav'nly Foe :  
 They weep, they beat their Breasts, they rend  
 [their Hair,  
 And rich embroider'd Vests for Presents bear.*

Such were the Statues of Gold at the Gates of Alcinous's Palace, which held Flambeaux in their Hands to give Light at Night, described by Homer in the Seventh Book of his *Odyssey*.

*Two Rows of stately Dogs on either Hand,  
 In sculptur'd Gold and labour'd Silver stand.  
 These Vulcan form'd with Art Divine, to wait  
 Immortal Guardians at Alcinous' Gate ;  
 Alive each animated Frame appears,  
 And still to live beyond the Pow'r of Years.*

Which Lines Lucrtius has thus translated in the Beginning of his Second Book.

*Si non aurea sunt juvenum simulacra per aedes,  
Lampadas igníferas manibus retinentia dextris,  
Lumina nocturnis epulis ut suppeditentur.*

Such in its Kind is the Shield of *Achilles*, upon which *Vulcan* had engraved so many fine Pictures, the Union of which hath so puzzled the Criticks. Such is the Cuirass of *Agamemnon*, and many other like Works, which will not allow us to doubt that the Arts of Sculpture and Engraving were invented and in Practice in *Homer's* Time, and before. As these two Arts have Designing for their Basis, it is manifest the Art of Designing, which must have been found out before them, is very ancient. But true Painting, the Art of Colouring a Design, or of designing with Colours, was it not in use in the most remote Ages of the World? *Pliny* seems to deny it, and those who have followed him, look upon his Opinion as incontestable. 'Tis true the Greek Words *γραφειν* and *ζωγραφος*, which occur so often in the Poets since *Homer*, are not to be found in the *Iliad* or *Odyssy*. The latter is not used, and if the former be used, it does not signify to paint, it merely signifies the Art of Writing: But several Passages in these two Poems furnish us with Reasons to conclude, that tho' the Name be not there, yet the Thing itself is there; and that Painting, which consists of two Parts, Drawing and Colouring, was known in *Homer's* Time, and not improbably at the Time of the *Trojan War*. To prove this, we need only offer some Observations. First of all upon the Things represented upon *Achilles's* Buckler; and in the next Place, upon the Works of Tapestry, which  
then



then employed the Fair Sex, as it does at present.

Here is our Author's Reasoning about the Shield. It is likely that Painting was in use, *i. e.* that ordinary Colours were employed to represent Objects, before it was attempted to represent them by the Colours which the Action of Fire upon Metals gives them: For the one is much easier than the other; and that Kind of Painting which is produced by the Impression of Fire, which we may in some Respect call Enameling, is but an Imitation of the Painting that is performed with the Pencil and Colours. Now we find upon the Metal of which *Achilles's* Shield was made, divers Objects coloured by the Action of Fire. Whence it very probably follows, that *Vulcan's* Work was but an Imitation of the latter Kind of Painting, and by consequence, this Art was known and in use at the Time *Homer* supposes this Shield to have been made. It is not to be imagined that *Homer* there speaks of an unknown Art; tho' the Artift be a God, the Poet, who is himself the God, only describes an Art already invented. It is not difficult to shew, that many things represented upon this Buckler were distinguished by Colouring. We need only look into the Description to see this. There was represented upon it, for Instance, a Plowman making Furrows in a Piece of Land; and as his Plow turns up the Earth, that Earth, tho' of Gold, appears black, and of such a Colour, as Ground really is when it is new till'd.

*A Field deep furrow'd next the God design'd,  
The third Time labour'd by the sweating Hind;  
The shining Steers full many Plowmen guide,  
And turn their croaked Takes on ev'ry Side.*

*Still*

*Still as at either End they wheel around,  
The Master meets 'em with his Goblet crown'd;  
The hearty Draught rewards, renews their Toil;  
Then back the turning Plowshares cleave the Soil:  
Behind, the rising Earth in Ridges roll'd,  
And fable look'd, tho' form'd of molten Gold.*

Again, the Poet speaks of a Vineyard *Vulcan* had represented upon it, in which he says the Grapes were black, tho' the Vines were of Gold.

*Next, ripe in yellow Hue, a Vineyard shines,  
Bent with the pond'rous Harvest of its Vines;  
A deeper Dye the dangling Clusters show,  
And curl'd on Silver Props, in order glow.*

Which could not be done but by a Mixture of some Metal with the Gold, and the Action of Fire upon both.

*Vulcan* made use of the natural Colour of the Metals to represent Oxen as they ought to be. He chose for this Effect Gold and Tin, *i. e.* yellow and white.

*Here Herds of Oxen march erect and bold,  
Rear high their Horns, and seem to lowe in Gold.*

Two Lions tear a Bull to Pieces and suck up his Blood, and this Blood is black; whether because the Metal was itself inclining to this Colour, or whether it was given to the Metal by the Action of the Fire.

*Two Lions rushing from the Wood appear'd  
And seiz'd a Bull, the Master of the Herd:  
He*

*He roar'd : In vain the Dogs, the Men withstood,  
They tore his Flesh, and drank his sable Blood.*

We might make the same Observations upon other Ornaments of this Buckler : But these are sufficient to prove, that since the Enameling Art was known in and before *Homer's* Time, Painting must have been so too.

Tho' this Proof seems strong enough to show, that the Art of Painting is more ancient than is generally imagined, and than *Pliny* seems to have thought ; yet it may not be improper to add another that may be taken from the Tapestries described by *Homer*, in which different Colours were employed by the Women skill'd in this Work, which is indeed so besitting the Sex, that the Invention of it is ascribed to a Goddess.

To begin then with what is most precise, and indeed capital, Mr. *L'Abbé Fraquier* observes, that when *Paris* and *Menelaus* were upon the Point of putting an End to the *Trojan War* by a single Combat, and *Iris* went to inform *Helen* of it, she found her working a Piece of Tapestry, representing the Battels her fatal Charms had occasioned, in the third Book of the *Iliad*.

*Her, in the Palace, at her Loom she found,  
The golden Web her own sad Story crown'd,  
The Trojan Wars she weav'd (herself the Prize)  
And the dire Triumphs of her fatal Eyes.*

When *Telemachus* takes Leave of *Menelaus*, *Helen* makes him a Present of a Piece of her Work, of which she had great Store, in the fifteenth Book of the *Odyssey*.

*The*



*The beauteous Queen revolv'd with careful Eyes  
Her various Textures of unnumber'd Dyes,  
And chose the largest ; with no vulgar Art,  
Her own fair Hands embroider'd ev'ry Part.*

And we must not imagine, that these Tapestries were all of one Colour ; or that *Helen's* Work resembled our Damask, or even that Kind of Painting, which is called *Camayeu* Picture, painted all with one Colour. For surely they were at no less Pains to represent Combats to the Life than Flowers. And we find in the twenty-second Book of the *Iliad*, that *Andromache*, when she got the News of her Husband *Heſtor's* Death, was working a Piece of Tapeſtry, in which the Poet expreſſy ſays, there were Flowers of different Colours.

*For in the cloſe Recesses of the Dome,  
Pensive ſhe ply'd the melancholy Loom ;  
A growing Work employ'd her ſecret Hours,  
Conſus'dly gay with intermingled Flow'rs.*

And if, in the Fourth Book of the *Odyſſey*, the Diſtaff brought to *Helen* was only filled with Violet, it does not follow from hence, that ſhe wrought with Wool of no other Colours ; but this the Poet has choſen in this Place, becauſe the Greek Word *ioδυσπος* is a very beautiful Word, and the Violet is a Kind of Purple very becoming ſuch a Perſon as *Helen*.

*Alcandra, Conſort of his high Command,  
A golden Diſtaff gave to Helen's Hand,*

*And*

*And that rich Vase with living Sculpture wrought,  
Which heap'd with Wool the beauteous Phyllo*  
[brought.

*The silken Fleece impurpl'd for the Loom,  
Rival'd the Hyacinth in vernal Bloom.*

For since we find different Colours were employed in these Kinds of Tapestry, we ought to judge of one by the rest, and conclude, that the precious Veil given by the Trojan Dames to *Minerva*, which was the Work of *Sidonian* Maids, was work'd in the same Manner. *Homer* seems expressly to say it was. For speaking in general of the various Stuffs with which *Hecuba's* Wardrobe was filled, he says, *Of Veils of various Tinctures and Dyes she chose the most splendid*; and he adds, *that it was bright as a Star*. And this he repeats again in the *Odysssey*, when he describes *Helen's* Present to *Telemachus*, as we have seen.

These Works were much of the same Kind with those Banners, on which were represented the Combats of the Gods, which were carried in great Solemnity through *Athens* in the *Panatheanean* Festivals, as many ancient Authors have remarked; *Plato* in particular, in his Dialogue entitled *Eutyphron*. And we must say the same of that Mantle of *Juno*, *Minerva* herself had embellished, as *Homer* tells us in the 14th Book of the *Iliad*.

*Around her next a heav'nly Mantle flow'd,  
That rich with Pallas' labour'd Colours glow'd.  
Large Clasps of Gold the Foldings gather'd round,  
A golden Zone her swelling Bosom bound.*

And

And of the Girdle of *Venus*, of which there is so delightful a Description in the same Book, where speaking of *Venus*, *Homer* says,

*And from her fragrant Breast the Zone embrac'd  
With various Skill, and high Embroid'ry grac'd.  
In this was ev'ry Art, and ev'ry Charm  
To win the Wisest, and the Coldest warm;  
Fond Love, the gentle Vow, the gay Desire,  
The kind Deceit, the still-reviving Fire,  
Persuasive Speech, and more persuasive Sighs;  
Silence that spoke, and Eloquence of Eyes.*

Of the Work of *Circe*, in the fifth Book of the *Odysssey*.

*While she with Work and Song the Time divides,  
And thro' the Loom the golden Shuttle guides.*

Of these Carpets *Priam* gave to *Achilles*, to have back the Body of *Heëtor*: And it is, no doubt, for the same Kind of Work, that in the sixth Book of the *Odysssey*, *Arete*, Mother to *Nausicaë*, has Distaffs loaded with Wool, dyed with Purple.

*Her Royal Hand a wond'rous Work designs,  
Around a Circle of bright Damsels shines,  
Part twist the Threads, and part the Wool  
[dispose,  
While with the Purple Orb the Spindle glows.*

And in the eighteenth Book, among the rich Presents *Penelope's* Suitors send her, there is a Veil of divers Colours.



*A Robe Antinous gives of shining Dyes,  
The varying Hues in gay Confusion rise.*

It was the Art of making such fine Works, that *Minerva*, according to *Homer*, in the twentieth Book of the *Odyſſey*, taught the Daughters of *Pandarus*.

*And Pallas taught the Texture of the Loom.*

From this long Detail of Tapeſtries, we may draw the ſame Concluſion, as from the Remarks made on *Achilles's* Buckler. It is probable, that Colours were employed in Painting before Wool was died with various Hues, to imitate, in ſome Manner, the ſame Things which Painting does. It is more eaſy and natural to uſe Colours with the Pencil, than to imagine an Art, which by Means of Threads of different Tinctures, carefully interwoven, ſhould accompliſh what may be done with leſs Trouble and Embarrasſment by Colours on a Pallet: And this Art muſt have been invented after Painting, of which it ſeems only to be a laborious Imitation. Yet we find it in *Homer's* Time practiſed in great Perfection in different Countries. And this Poet ſpeaks of it as an Art well known in the Time of the *Trojan* Siege. Painting is therefore more ancient than *Homer*; nay, more ancient than the *Trojan* War. For it is not likely, that it was found out in the Interval between that Siege and the Time when *Homer* wrote; and that the Poet, by the Liberty which Poetry gives to anticipate, had carried it back to that remote Time. Criticks are very well agreed about the Antiquity of the Things

Things *Homer* mentions. Besides, it is probable that the Ladies of those Times would want coloured Patterns, to direct them in working their Tapestries, as our best Artists now do, especially since they work'd Flowers and Figures into them. 'Tis hardly credible that Flowers, far less that Combats could be done to the Life, without the Assistance of Designs and coloured Patterns. But what else are such Designs and Patterns but Pictures? Painting therefore, contrary to *Pliny's* Opinion, was known in these Ages, which are the most distant Times we have any Knowledge of from profane Authors.

The true Origin of this, as well as of almost all other Arts, is very obscure. It is enough to have made appear with some Plausibility, that Painting is so ancient that we cannot trace it to its first Rise, which was perhaps as early as the Beginning of the World.

Our Author hath made use of no other Testimonies, in his Enquiry into the Antiquity of Painting, but those of the most ancient of all profane Writers. For in the Poets who came after *Homer*, we find Painting fully established; and it is not worth while to search into *Anacreon*, *Eschylus*, *Euripides*, and other Poets who have flourished since that Time.

*Virgil*, who had read and examined the Poems of *Homer* more than any one else, has not scrupled, speaking of the same Times *Homer* describes, to suppose Painting to have been then not only invented, but at its highest Perfection. He was not afraid of being thought to have transgressed against the Truth of History and Chronology, when he placed Pictures in the Temple of *Juno* at *Carthage*, in which he makes *Aeneas* find himself among the other Heroes there painted.

*Himself he saw amidst the Grecian Train,  
Mix'd in the bloody Battle on the Plain.*

And to leave no room for doubting that he was speaking of Painting, he says in express Terms (c).—— *Animum pictura pascit inani.*

*And with an empty Picture fed his Mind.*

(c) 'Tis well worth while to consult Mr. Pope's Notes upon the Passages in *Homer* here quoted; and to these several others might be added to prove *Homer's* Taste of Painting. See *Iliad* Book 8. v. 160, &c. where Mr. Pope observes, ' Here is a Battle described with so much Fire, that the warmest Imagination of an able Painter cannot add a Circumstance to heighten the Surprise or Horror of the Picture. Here is what they call the *Fracas*, or Hurry and Tumult of the Action, in the utmost Strength of Colouring, upon the Fore-ground; and the *Repose* or Solemnity, with great Propriety, at a Distance. First, in the *Eloignement*, we behold *Jupiter* in golden Armour, surrounded with Glory, upon the Summit of Mount *Ida*; his Chariot and Horses by him, wrapt up in dark Clouds. In the next Place, below the Horizon, appear the Clouds rolling and opening, thro' which the Lightning flashes in the Face of the *Greeks*, who are flying on all Sides: *Agamemnon* and the rest of the Commanders in the Rear, in Postures of Astonishment. Towards the Middle of the Piece, we see *Nestor* in the utmost Distress, one of his Horses having a deadly Wound in the Forehead with a Dart, which makes him rear, writh, and disorder the rest. *Nestor* is cutting the Harneß with his Sword, while *Hector* advances driving full Speed. *Diomedes* interposes, in an Action of the utmost Fierceness and Intrepidity: These two Heroes make the principal Figures and Subject of the Picture. A burning Thunderbolt falls just before the Feet of *Diomedes's* Horses, from whence a horrid Flame of Sulphur rises.

This is only a Specimen of a single Picture designed by *Homer*, out of the many with which he has beautified the *Iliad*. And indeed every thing is so natural and so lively, that the History Painter would generally have no more to do, but to delineate the Forms, and copy the Circumstances, just as he finds them described by this great Master. We cannot therefore wonder at what has been so often said

of



• of Homer's furnishing Ideas to the most famous Painters of  
• Antiquity.

Where is such a Note to be found in any Commentator upon *Homer*, or any ancient Poet? Any Note in this instructive Taste, besides this admirable Translator and Commentator of *Homer*? See his excellent Dissertation upon the Shield of Achilles, in which it is considered in a Light no other Critick ever had view'd it. No Modern one, I mean. For that it was considered in that View by the Ancients, is plain from a Passage in the elder *Philostratus's* Life of *Apollonius Tyanus*; an Analysis of it by the younger *Philostratus*, in his Description of a Part into which this Shield enter'd. And from the Life of *Homer* by an unknown Ancient, published in Mr. Gale's Collection of *Greek philosophical and mythological Tracts*.

But this Subject (*the Antiquity of Painting*) hath been lately handled at great Length by Mr. *Turnbull*, in his Treatise of ancient Painting, where almost all the Passages in ancient Authors relating to this Art, are digested into Order; and where its Connexion with Poetry, and the Connexion both of Poetry and Painting with Philosophy, are largely discoursed upon.





*A DISCOURSE upon the PERSPECTIVE in ancient PAINTING and SCULPTURE.*

By Mr. L'Abbe SALLUR \*.

*Read to the Academy of Literature, April 6th, 1728.*

**S**OME Passages in certain Authors have led me to enquire whether the Ancients were totally Strangers to Perspective. Mr. *Perrault*, who undertook the Cause of the Moderns, asserts, in the second Volume of his *Parallel*, that they were.

*The Ancients*, says he, *were ignorant of an Infinity of curious Secrets in this Part of Sculpture (Bas-relieves) at the Time that Trajan's Pillar was made, in which no regard is had to Perspective. In this Pillar almost all the Figures are upon the same Line ; if some few are behind, they are as big, and as strongly mark'd as those which are more advanc'd ; insomuch that they seem to be mounted up-*

\* *Mémoires*, &c. Tom. 8. p. 97.

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*upon Steps, that they might be seen one above the other. In another Place he affirms, that the so celebrated Zeuxis and Apelles knew nothing of that Part of Painting which relates to the placing of Figures in the Plan of a Picture, according to the Rules of Diminution. In fine, he will not allow, that there appears any Knowledge of Perspective, or of Ordonnance, in the Paintings of the Ancients.*

This Opinion of Mr. Perrault may be reduced into these two Propositions. The first is, that the ancient Painters and Sculptors had no Idea of Perspective; that they were quite ignorant of its Rules, and were not conducted by the Knowledge of those Principles which now serve to guide our modern Painters. The other is, that by consequence they did not understand the Secret of degrading their Figures, either with Reference to Form or Colouring; and that they never painted any Piece, in which this Diminution was observable.

I would not assert, that the Ancients had as perfect a Notion of Perspective as we now have. Perhaps the thorough Intelligence of the Mysteries of this Science must necessarily have been the Fruit of the Search, Thinking, Taste, and Labour, of the many extraordinary Genius's which have appeared in the World since. As the Arts and Sciences mutually aid one another, the Discoveries that have been made in several Arts which have a Connexion with Painting, may have contributed to extend our Knowledge, and to render our Productions more regular and more perfect. Every Age adds something to the Improvements of the preceding ones. I think it would be going too far to affect a perfect Equality



lity in this Article, between the Knowledge of the Ancients and the Moderns.

If Mr. *Perrault* had been satisfied with giving some Superiority to our Age, I should not have opposed his Sentiment. But out of his Zeal for the Moderns, he seems to me to have too far degraded the Merit of the ancient Painters: He hath allowed himself to be carried too far by his Ardour to exalt the Moderns. What Probability, in fact, is there, that Painting could have made so great a Figure in the Reign of *Alexander the Great*, if the ablest Masters of that Time had no Idea of Perspective, without which it is agreed, a Painter can't so much as draw a Line, or make one just Stroke with his Pencil? Does not such an Imagination conclude in it a Sort of Contradiction?

'Tis known, that much had been written in those ancient Times upon the Art of Painting: Perspective is one of its most essential Parts; and in these Treatises all the Parts of Painting were handled. The Title of these Discourses are preserved to us; and were it necessary to venture upon Conjectures, there is ground to presume from their Titles, that Perspective was one of the principal Subjects treated of in them. It is more rational to draw this Consequence, than to affirm, upon a purely negative Argument, and without any further Enquiry into the Matter, that the Ancients had not the least Idea of Perspective. But I quit these Conjectures and Presumptions, however favourable they may appear to my Side of the Question; and I flatter myself I shall be able to prove that the Ancients understood Perspective, by shewing they put it in Practice. I build my Persuasion upon the Testimony of some Authors, who I may adventure to

to say, had very learned Eyes, and were very intelligent in these Matters.

Perspective is the Art of representing Objects upon a plain Surface, conformably to the Differences Distance makes, whether with regard to Figure or Colour. It is distinguished into two Parts, aerial and lineal. The latter consists in a just or proportionable fore-shortening of the Lines: The other is a just or proportionable Diminution of the Colours. I come now to the Passages which appear to me to prove that Perspective thus understood was not unknown to the Ancients.

The first is in the Dialogue of *Plato*, entitled, *The Sophist* (d). There the Question is, how a *Sophist* ought to be defined. In this View he is considered in various Lights, which all concur to compleat his Character, and these different Considerations lead the Interlocutors to say, that the *Sophist's* Art hath Imitation for its Scope, of which two Kinds are distinguished. The first, 'tis said, is called *Representative*, because it imitates, by observing the Proportions of a Model in Length, Breadth, and Depth, and by giving to every Object in particular its proper Colour. Upon this one of the Dialogists asks, If all who propose to imitate, do not imitate in this Manner? And the other answers, No surely, this is not the Sculptor's, or Painter's Aim, when they attempt great Subjects. For if they should keep to the real Proportions of beautiful Objects, you can't be ignorant that Things situated in a certain Point of Elevation would appear too small to us, and those placed much lower would appear too large, the one being seen at a greater Distance, and the other at a nearer. 'Tis for this

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Reason that our Artists now forsake the Truth, and give their Figures not the real Proportions of the Model, but such as will have the best Effect to the Eye.

If we attend to the Sense of this Passage, we shall find that it amounts to the following Propositions. The first is, that the Statuaries sometimes made Figures in High Relievo, exactly conformable to the Dimensions of the Models they had chosen. The Second is, That the same Artists did not frequently keep to these Dimensions, but quite changed them. The Third is, That the Painters did the same, and did not tie themselves up to the strict Observance of real Dimensions in their Imitations. The fourth is, That they consulted in their Works the Appearances of Objects, the Probable and Specious ; and that they regulated the Strokes of their Pencil according to the Points of Situation, Distance and Sight in which their Figures were to be placed. The whole Tenor of the Passage I am now expounding, infinitely conduces to confirm the two last Propositions. For one of the Persons in the Dialogue, calls the Figure done by the Artist, *the Apparent τὸ φαίνμενον, τὸ φάντασμα*, which does not resemble what it is said to represent. He says, this is the Manner of Imitation in Painting, and every other Art that pretends to imitate : And this is the Second Kind of Imitation mentioned in this Passage, which they there think should be called *φανταστικόν*, Imaginary or Fantastical.

This double Manner of Imitation produces two Kinds of Truth. The one I shall call historical Truth, consisting in the Exhibition of Objects as Nature has really formed them : The other I shall call the Truth of Art, consisting in  
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making Things appear to us to be what they are, tho' they be not really drawn such as they are in Nature ; and that by Means of Sinking and giving Relief by Light and Shade, by Strengthening and Softening, and by the *Contour* they give to Figures. It is easy to hit historical Truth ; but it requires Genius, Study, and Science, to attain to the Truth of Art in a Picture, and to imitate the Effects of Objects upon the Sight.

The Truth of Art, to speak with philosophical Precision, is a Deceit, it is an Illusion Painting puts upon our Senses. Thus the same *Socrates*, who is one of the Personages in the *Sophists*, tells us in the Tenth Book of *Plato's Republic* (e), *That Imitation is very remote from Truth : That it is Sport and Amusement : that the same Bulk does not seem equal to us at different Distances ; that Objects strike our Eyes in various Manners, according to the Differences of the Mediums thro' which they are seen ; that Colours often deceive us ; that this Illusion passes from our Senses into our Minds ; and that Painting, taking Advantage of the Disposition it finds in us to be imposed upon, tries every Method of cheating our Sight and enchanting us ; that the Gods, to defend us against these Impositions, have given us the Ruler and the Compass, and the Art of Measuring, by the Means of which we may come to know Things as they really are : That thus Appearances no longer delude us, but Truth and Reality get place in our Understandings.* τὸ λογισάμενον, τὸ μετρήσαν ἀρχεῖν.

We may see by these Words of *Socrates*, that we are always in Danger of being deceived by the

the industrious Artifices of Painting, which is then most perfect, when it most imposes upon us. But this Illusion does not consist in the Invention which reigns throughout the Picture, nor in the simple Delineation, nor yet in the Expressions the Painter gives his Figures. What then is that false Impression Painting makes upon our Senses? 'Tis the apparent Resemblance of a Figure to the Model it is designed to represent, while it is not really so. Commonly the Figure appears of a middle Size, when it is really of a much larger one; or it seems small, and yet the Model is far from being such. In fine, the Illusion consists in representing the Fore and Backgrounds, the Relieve and the Sinking so well, that notwithstanding the Equality of the plain Surface, upon which Things are painted, we are made to imagine, that we see quite another Thing than is really in the Picture; we find the Truth of Art there, but by Deceit, and to the Prejudice of historical Truth.

The Ancients therefore knew something of Perspective; they were sensible of the Use of it, and they possessed the Secret of making the Effects of their Representations serve to the Perfection of the End they proposed by them. The Principle which guided them in thus imposing upon the Senses, was the Modification of Size and Form; it was the Modification of Colours, by augmenting or diminishing their Force and Splendor. They must then have understood Degradation.

Taking the two Passages I have cited for a simple Testimony given by *Socrates*, of what was practised and effected by the Ancients in their Paintings, without doing any Violence to his Words,

Words, we might deduce from them the principal Precepts of Perspective. We see, in what *Socrates* reports of the Skill of the Artists in his Time, what *Leonardo da Vinci* tells us, in his Treatise of Painting, ought to be done with Reference to Perspective (f).

The Changes of Proportions, which are so precisely expressed in the foregoing Passages, and of which we find Examples in ancient and modern Works, were not, every one must own, done without Intelligence; and consequently, there must have been certain fixed Rules for working in this Manner. Whatever the Standard may have been, whether Aspect or Elevation, the Rules must have been derived from a certain Proportion that necessarily takes Place between the Points of Distance, and the Augmentation or Diminution of Figures. The Proportion must vary as the particular Points of Distance vary, and could not have been determined without a very exact and clear Knowledge of the Modifications of Sizes and Colours, so as to produce any Appearance the Artist had a mind, and to please to such a Degree as we know ancient Paintings very frequently did.

'Tis then only by strengthening or weakening the Lines of the Colours, that Painting imposes upon our Senses: And it is against the Enchantments of Degradation that *Socrates* says *we ought to arm our selves with the Ruler and Compass*: It is only by applying them to Figures that we can attain to historical Truth, and distinguish it from the Illusion of Art.

To throw Figures in a Picture at a Distance, make some approach us, and others fly off, was a Deceit in Painting, to which ancient Artists were

(f) Paris, 1651.]



were no Strangers. *Vitruvius* has preserved to us the Memory of an ancient Painter, *Apatanus*. He painted, for a small Theatre in the City *Tralles* (g), a Scene, in which he represented, instead of Pillars, Statues of Centaurs, which supported Architraves, arched Roofs, and Domes. Above these he painted a second Order, supporting other Domes, Roofs of which one half only was seen, and all the Ornaments of the Tops of the Buildings.

“ This Scene, says the learned Translator of  
 “ *Vitruvius*, had so beautiful an Effect, because  
 “ the Painter had managed the different Parts so  
 “ artfully, that this Architecture had all its  
 “ Juttings.”

The Text literally signifies, that this Scene wonderfully pleased the Sight *propter asperitatem*, because of its Roughness, or rather because of its Inequality ; which proceeded from placing the Lights and Shades so judiciously, that they had a very strong Relief, and seemed to come out ; so that the Cloth, as smooth and flat as it was, appeared prominent in some Parts, and hollow in others. It was impossible that certain Parts in this Picture could appear to be advanc'd and to stand out, and others not appear sunk and at a Distance, which is the whole Secret of Perspective. Tho' this Consequence be evident, and involved (so to speak) in the very Terms of this Passage, I shall however endeavour to strengthen and confirm it ; and that from another Testimony of the same *Vitruvius* and his *French* Translator. *Democritus* and *Anaxagoras* (b) have wrote upon this Subject, and shewn by what Artifice a Point being taken in a certain Place,

(g) *Vitruv.* l. 7. cap. 5.

(b) *Præf.* l. 7.

Place, the Lines may be so disposed, as to represent Buildings, or Scenes made for the Decoration of Theatres, to such Perfection, that tho' all be painted upon a flat Surface, yet some Parts shall appear to bulge and stand out, and others to retire and sink.

Painting hath a Language peculiar to it; and those who understand it, will readily agree we cannot otherwise express the Illusions of Perspective, when we have Occasion to speak of its Effects. If we should attempt any further Explication of this Passage, we should but render it more obscure.

The Ancients then were not ignorant of Perspective; so that if the Merit and Excellence of Painting depend upon that, we can't deny that this Art had attained to its Perfection among them.

It is by the Signification of the Terms in the Passages already quoted, that we must fix the Meaning of the following ones; and above all, of the Encomium *Pliny* gives to the Painter *Pamphilus* (i), where he commends his extensive Learning, and more especially his extraordinary Skill in Arithmetick and Geometry, which Sciences *Pamphilus* thought of absolute Necessity to the Perfection of his Art. Surely we do not pay too great a Compliment to this Painter, by allowing him to have had some Idea of Perspective, seeing he is said to have been so able a Geometrician.

*Apelles*, instructed in the School of *Pamphilus*, so superior to all who had gone before him, and inimitable by all who came after him, could not have carried the Art to such a height of Perfection, had he been destitute of that Science which  
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(i) Lib. 35.

alone can regulate the Proportions of Figures in a Picture. Upon this depends Grace and Beauty: And in these Qualities consisted the peculiar Excellency of his Works (k).

*Pliny* adds, that *Amphion* excelled *Apelles* in the Disposition and Ordonnance of a Picture; and *Asclepiodorus* in proportioning the Distances between the Parts of the same Figure, or rather between the several Figures in the same Picture. This last Sense is more intelligible and consistent than the former. But it belongs to Perspective to regulate and mark the Intervals or Distances between Figures.

In fine, Painting is a Kind of Poetry; it is mute Poetry: It is therefore very natural to compare them, and to judge of the Progress of the one by that of the other. The Poets have often furnished the Painters with their finest Ideas; and it is incomprehensible how Painting could have continued so imperfect, as not to have for a long Time understood a Rule which is of principal Use in the Composition of Pictures, since it must be owned, that the Poets themselves observed this Rule in their Works; for there is a Kind of Degradation in their Pictures. *Euripides*, for Instance, in his *Iphigenia*, has accurately distinguished and marked the principal Personages concerned in this great Action: *Iphigenia* bravely devotes herself for her Country: *Agamemnon* silences the Sentiments of his paternal Tenderness: *Achilles* forgets his Love: All the other Characters have a Relation to the Sacrifice of *Iphigenia*, and a close Union: Nothing can be better connected. But these Personages are presented in a sort of *Lontano*, and the Poet gives but a *Glimpse* of them: He turns the Attention  
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(k) *Ibidem*.



of his Spectators wholly to *Iphigenia*: He gives a particular Character to every one who has any Share in the main Action. Now suppose, instead of painting this History by Words, we were to represent it by Colours, this Picture must have Unity of Action, Time and Place; the Composition must be judicious; the principal Figures must be accurately distinguished by correct and elegant Design, and exhibited in stronger Colours than the rest: Each ought to have his peculiar and true Character, and to speak his proper Sentiments: The other Personages in this Piece will be cast at a Distance, and be express'd by feebler Strokes and Colours.

We have Reason to think, that what we have now supposed possible and fit to be done, was actually executed by *Timanthes*, conformably to the Design *Euripides* had delineated. His Picture has been highly commended by the greatest Masters (*l*), or at least by the most intelligent Judges. This Painter had transplanted into his Picture even the Expressions of the Poet; and it has been remarked, that after having represented the Parents and Friends of *Iphigenia* each with a different Character of Grief, having thus exhausted all the Riches of Expression, he painted *Agamemnon* covering his Son. This was a sure and most ingenious Way of making the Excess of Affliction to be felt by the Spectators: He left them to judge of it by the Strength of the Expressions in the Countenances of *Achilles*, *Menelaus*, *Ajax*, and *Calchas*. As precise as the Testimonies I have reported, and as just as the Consequences I have drawn from them are, yet nothing seems to me to favour my Sentiment more, than the Observations which have been made upon several Gems in the King's Cabinet. In these

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(*l*) Plin. lib. 35.

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we see a remarkable Degradation of the Figures suitable to the Place of each, in the Plan of the Representation. The famous Stone, known under the Name of *Michael-Angelo's Seal*, is one of those; for I think we need not trouble our selves much with the Suspicions that may come into some Minds about its Antiquity: 'Tis too well known, that it could not have been the Production of the Age, in which we must, if it be modern, suppose it to have been wrought. The Want of Perspective in *Trajan's Pillar*, which is the strongest Argument *Charles Perrault* has been able to bring of the Excellence of modern Sculpture above that of the Ancients, is therefore not sufficient to efface the Glory of the Ancients. For, besides that it is contrary to all the Precepts and Rules of good Reasoning ancient and modern, to found a general Induction upon a single Example, *Mr. Perrault* knew better than most others, that the great Masters often set themselves above Rules, to attain the more surely to their Aim. They have their Licences, and when they are judiciously taken, and turned to the Advantage of the Work, either with regard to Beauty or Grace, it is then a Merit to have dared to enfranchise one's self from the Yoke of Rules. If Licences be justifiable in any Part of Sculpture or Painting, it is with respect to Perspective. *Mr. Du Fresnoy* recommends the Observance of it in his Poem on the Art of Painting; but he advertises us at the same time, that we ought to be upon our Guard not to adhere to it too scrupulously. We ought to subject ourselves to it, while it leads us into an agreeable and secure Way of attaining to the End Painting proposes, which is, Pleasure to the Eye,  
and

and Satisfaction to the Spectator, but to abandon it whenever it would take us out of that Road, or when keeping to it would not gain that End. It is upon the same Principles that Mr. *de Piles* has observed, that the great Painters have neglected regularly to make Objects more agreeable; that the ancient Sculptors, not judging it proper to follow exactly the *Geometral* of Perspective, have made the distant Figures in *Trajan's* (a) Pillar larger than those which are nearer the Sight. Mr. *de Piles*, whose Authority in these Matters ought to have no less Weight than Mr. *Perrault's*, owns, that the Want of Degradation in *Trajan's* Pillar did not proceed from Ignorance of Perspective, but from the Artist's Design, superior to all Rules of Art, of pleasing the Sight, by rendering the Objects more palpable and sensible. The Rule of degrading Figures according to their Places in the Plan, is not of indispensable Necessity; and no Person has a Right to pronounce an Artist, who hath not observed it, ignorant of the Art, since the technical Part may sometimes be judiciously submitted to the Perfection of his Work.

(a) See some excellent Observations upon *Trajan's* and *Antonine's* Pillars, and upon the Licenses belonging to Designs, Bas-relievos, Engravings, and other Works of that Kind, in the Earl of *Shaftsbury's* Notion of the Tablature of the Judgment of *Hercules*. The whole Subject of ancient Painting hath been lately set in full Light by a Treatise upon the *Painting of the Ancients*, by G. *Turnbull*, L. L. D. It contains both the History and the Philosophy of the Art; and there the latter, as well as the former is collected from Passages in ancient Authors relative to Painting. What respects their Skill in Perspective, is considered in the 4th Chapter, where this Discourse is commended.





Some REFLEXIONS upon the  
POLITENESS of the Romans.

By Mr. SIMON.\*

**A**FTER Men began to live in Cities, and in a more commodious and less savage Manner, their Reason inspired them with reciprocal Regards towards one another, which each Nation expressed differently, according to its particular Genius.

The Easterns, who have lively Imaginations, warm Hearts, and very supple Minds, were very expressive, passionate and humble in their external Civilities. The Reception *Lot* and *Abraham* gave the *Angels*, whom they took for Men; the Submissions of *Abigail* to *David* to appease his Wrath; and the Protestations this Prince made to *Saul*, after the Adventure of the Cave, are Instances of that Oriental Politeness, which was carried to such Excess by the *Chaldeans*, *Medes* and *Persians*, who were bred up  
in

\* Memoirs, Tom. i. p. 69.

in Dependence, under a despotick Domination, which was rever'd to an idolatrous Pitch.

The *Europeans*, who have naturally a graver Turn, and are more stubborn and indocile, and could never so easily submit to absolute Government, testified their Friendship, Esteem and Respect in a more simple and less cringing Manner.

Thus the ancient *Greeks*, accustomed to the Equality which prevails in free and popular States, repelled, as insupportable Meannesses, all those servile Submissions which the Kings of *Persia* exacted from them, who had so courageously exposed their Lives in their Service.

Tho' the Manners of the *Italians* were much softened by the different *Greek* Colonies, which from Time to Time mingled with them, yet they appear to have liv'd together with more Probity than Ceremony.

*Rome*, founded of a confused Mixture of very unpolish'd Nations, was for a long Time very coarse in her Manners. The Toils of War and of a rustick Life, long kept up the original Barbarity of the *Romans*. Government began to civilize them. Necessity rendered the Populace submissive and respectful; and Ambition made the Great courteous and affable. At last, Plenty, Luxury, and Literature, together with their Commerce with the *Greeks*, whose ancient Virtue had now degenerated into Politeness, brought towards the End of the Republick, and under the first Emperors *Roman* Urbanity to its Perfection. But it decreased insensibly, and during the Decadence of the Empire declined into Servility and Meanness.

Mr. *Simon* judging such a Subject as susceptible of Ornament, as proper for Instruction,

chose to treat of it at different *Reprises*. But because of those different Epochs of *Roman* Politeness, the first could afford but very little Entertainment, and the Third hath not sufficient Dignity to deserve to be treated of, he confined himself to the Second, in which *Roman* Good-breeding was at its highest Perfection. To handle this Matter in due Order, he first of all described the ordinary Marks of Respect and Submission, which Inferiors paid to their Superiors; next, the Testimonies of Humanity and Condescension Superiors rendered to their Inferiors; and last of all, the Rules of Decency and Civility observed amongst Equals: A Point we shall here but very lightly touch, because it is explained at great length in other Discourses upon the private Life of the *Romans*.

The Great, who at the Foundation of *Rome* were only distinguished from the lower Ranks of the People, in order to be their Protectors, the latter being then only attached to the former by Ties of Gratitude, became afterwards Masters of an Infinity of voluntary Slaves, avaritious Citizens, and interested Clients: And it was then that the abject Spirit of the one, and the Arrogance of the other, introduced an unwieldy Load of Ceremonies.

It became almost an indispensable Obligation to go every Morning to the Levees of Persons of Quality, to whom one either was, or would appear to be attached. Citizens, and not unfrequently Magistrates, ran about from House to House, to pay Morning Compliments to some great Man, who had likewise Homage to pay in his Turn to a greater than himself.

The Form in paying this Compliment was to put one's Hand to his Mouth, and to advance



in that Posture towards the Person to whom the Visit was made; whence comes the Word *adore*; for thus also were the Gods saluted, with this Difference alone, that one did not uncover to the Gods, and to the Great it was a necessary Piece of Homage.

It was also a Mark of Respect, to kiss the Person's Hand one went to pay his court to. Soldiers saluted by lowering their Arms: But we do not find that the ordinary Salutation was accompanied with any Bending of the Body, or Genuflexion. These servile Ceremonies were not introduced till after the Dissolution of the Republick.

The Morning Visits were paid in a Robe of Ceremony, *i. e.* in the white Gown, which was the Dress among the *Romans*. The Clients interchang'd their Civilities one with another, till the Patron appeared, or they were told he had gone out privately by a Back-door, to escape their Compliments. If he went out publicly, his Visitors made a Circle about his Chair or Sedan. Some shewed their Zeal by keeping off the Croud; others by pressing to get as near their Patron as they could to see him, and be seen by him. Generally speaking, an Inferior never fail'd to get up when a great Man enter'd into any Assembly, and to keep uncover'd in his Presence; to give him the Middle, which was the most honourable Place; to give him the right Hand in walking with him; to stop when he stop'd, and to leave the highest Part of the Pavement free for him when one met him in the Streets.

In Visiting, the Custom was to send in one's Name in a certain Form, and to be introduced into the Apartment by a Master of Ceremonies.

There was no Dispensation from this Constraint and Formality but by the Right of great Intimacy, except on certain solemn, privileg'd Times, such as New-year's Day, and the Patron's Birth-day, on which Occasions he presented himself publicly to receive Compliments from every body. It is needless to take Notice of their Attention on such Days to their Dress, to be clean and proper, in which was reckoned a necessary Badge of their Desire to please, or to the other Decencies concerning which *Cicero* has laid down such judicious Rules in his first Book of Offices.

Entertainments were no less incumber'd with Formalities than other Meetings and Visits. The Laws established with Reference to them, are too well known to need to be repeated here. If one had the Honour to entertain any Person of Distinction, the Choice of his Company was left entirely to him, and who he pleased were ask'd in his Name. If an Inferior was invited by his Superior, it was absolutely necessary to go in full Dress; and Civility consisted not in taking the worst or least honourable Place, but that which the Master of the Feast had appointed for him.

A Master-carver cut the Victuals with great Art, and distributed them among the Guests. To this Custom *Ovid* alludes, when he recommends touching them with the Fingers in the most delicate Manner; for Forks were not then in use.

The general Rules of Decency which Reason or Custom had introduced into Conversation amongst Persons of Rank and Dignity, were also observed in their Epistolary Commerce. We find in *Cicero's*, and in *Pliny's*, and in *Seneca's* Letters,

Letters, perfect Models of that Urbanity which was so peculiar to the *Romans*. One may see from them with what Delicacy they endeavoured to gain the Esteem and Affection of those whose good Graces they ambition'd: The polite Address with which they recommended a Friend: The obliging, courteous Terms they used in demanding Favours, in congratulating upon Success, or in paying Compliments of Condolance. Mean while, 'tis observable, that the Shadow of Liberty, which seemed to put all the Citizens upon a Level, notwithstanding the vast Distances Wealth and Power had made amongst them, preserved for a long Time an Air of Simplicity in their Letters, that sets the high-strain'd Expressions, which often make all the Merit of ours, in a very ridiculous Light. An obliging Wish at the Beginning, and an affectionate Advice at the End, were all the Ceremonial.

It must be added to the Honour of the *Romans*, they paid the same Respect to the Aged, as to Persons of Quality; and the Homage they rendered to their Parents was so great, that a Son or Son-in-law never presumed to bathe with a Father, or Father-in-law.

Promotion to Places of Trust and Dignity depended upon the Suffrages of the People: And this obliged the Great to be humane and affable. Ambition and Vanity found their Account in Humility and Complaisance.

Candidates for publick Employments being under the Necessity of making court to the lowest Citizens; after having in the Morning very graciously received all who came to visit them, went through the City to sollicite, cloathed in white, and attended by their Friends, Neighbours, and Clients. The most illustrious



Magistrates who interested themselves in a Competitor for any Office, waited upon him to recommend him to the People. The Candidate having his *Nomenclator* with him to tell him every one's Name he met, embraced every body who came in his Way. — It was chiefly by such Courtesies that one raised himself to any Dignity, or could maintain it. The first Emperors piqu'd themselves upon their Complaisance and Affability. *Augustus* refused with Marks of Indignation the high Title the People offered to him. He admitted promiscuously all the Citizens to his Morning Levee; and took it so much amiss if any one accosted him with any Appearance of Fear, that he severely upbraided a Petitioner for presenting him his Memorial, as if he had been giving a Piece of Money to an Elephant.

The Publick Place was the Rendezvous where all the Citizens made a daily Traffick of exchanging Compliments and mutual Protestations of Love and Friendship. Interest and Decency concurred to keep up this Commerce: But the Honour and Advantage of the Republick sometimes had a Share in it; or at least were made the Pretext for it, for there was as little Sincerity in this Traffick as in any other. Those who embrac'd and saluted with the seemingly warmest Affection, were not a bit better Friends for all that fair Shew.

The first Manner of saluting became at last so incommodious, on account of the many disagreeable Persons one was exposed to, and whom one could not in Civility rebuke, that *Tiberius* was forced to forbid it by an Edict. But it seems this Prohibition did not long take place; for *Martial* complains heavily of this nauseous Custom, and  
freely

freely tells one *Posthumius*, that he preferred a little less Honour to a very offensive Piece of Politeness.

The other Civilities Decency had introduced consisted in making Presents to Friends on their Birth-days, and in spending those Anniversaries with them in Mirth and Jollity, in paying them ceremonious Visits, and in complimenting them on certain Emergencies, in attending their Family Assemblies, Marriages, or Merry-meetings, where they were invited, in drinking to one another's Health, and that very frequently out of the same Cup, and in toasting to one another their absent or present Friends.

The Complaisance paid to the Ladies at *Rome*, leaves no Room to doubt but there were as many Refinements in this Part of Politeness as in any other. But with Respect to that Article, Mr. *Simon* thought it sufficient just to mention the chief Privileges they enjoyed, such as that of being carried in Chairs through the City, of having distinguished Places set apart for them at publick Spectacles, and of having a Right to the Honour of a Funeral Oration.





**A DISSERTATION upon what  
was called URBANITY or POLITE-  
NESS of the Romans.**

**By Mr. L'Abbé GEDOWN.**

*Read to the Academy of Literature, May 17th,  
1728\*.*

**PART I.**

**T**HE Terms *Urbanus* and *Urbanitas* in *Latin*, are Words which have very confused, undetermined Ideas affixed to them. I propose in this Discourse to develop their Meaning, and to indicate the principal Authors who excelled in what the *Romans* called Urbanity. And because every Writer ought to have the publick Utility as much in View as possible, I shall also endeavour to point out the Way of attaining to this Perfection. If any  
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\* *Memoirs, &c.* T. 9. p. 189.



Subject be suitable to the End of these Assemblies, this certainly is; for the Urbanity of which I am to treat, is the Charm of polite Literature, a Charm without which it happens to the Sciences, and the other good Qualities of the Mind, as it does to Fruits, which however good to the Taste, do not please the Eye for Want of a Beauty and Grace they ought to have.

'Tis surprizing, that in such a Language as ours, and in so polite a Nation, the Word *Urbanity* should have found such Difficulty in being admitted. For tho' many excellent Writers have us'd it, and tho' the Academy for the *French* Language has authoriz'd it, we can't say that it is even yet in current Usage. I have had some Pleasure in enquiring into the Reason of this; and I can't think that it is because the Word is too long, as some have imagined; nor because it is almost *Latin*; for how many Words have we in our Tongue of the same length, which are evidently as near a-kin to the *Roman* Language? *Civility*, *Humanity*, not to mention an Infinity of other Words, are they not liable to the same Exceptions? We must therefore look about for some other Reason. For to have Recourse here to the unaccountable Whimsicalness of Languages, is very like resolving physical Effects into occult Qualities.

I fancy that we *French*, who seldom examine Things to the Bottom, have not perceived the Necessity of this Term; and have imagined that our Words *Politeness* and *Gallantry* comprehend all that is meant by *Urbanity*. But those who think so are mistaken. For the Word always signifies more, and sometimes quite a different Thing. Besides, *Urbanitas* among the *Romans*

was

was a proper Word, signifying that Politeness of Language, Taste, and Manners, that was peculiar to Rome, which, as being the Capital of the Empire, was called by Way of Eminence, *Urbs*, the City. Whereas amongst us Politeness not being the Prerogative of any Town in particular, not even of our Capital, but of the Court, the Term Urbanity, to say the Truth, becomes a metaphorical one, with the Want of which we can well dispense. In fine, the Idea it conveys into our Mind, not being very precise, that is the Reason why it is not yet much used.

But what is very strange is, that the Word Urbanity among the Romans themselves was variously defined. Hence it is manifest, that they themselves had not a very distinct Idea of its Meaning. So true is this, that we find *Urbanus* taken in a bad Sense. We have an Example of this in *Horace*, when he says in his Epistle to *Cl. Nero*.

*Sed timui ne fluxisse minora putarer,  
Diffimulator opis propria, mihi commodus uni:  
Sic ego majoris fugiens approbria culpa,  
Frontis ad Urbanæ descendi præmio.*

Where we see that *frons urbana* signifies Impudence. As far as I have been able to observe, it is always taken in a good Sense. But it is not easy to determine its precise Meaning, or, to speak more properly, to determine in what the Roman Urbanity consisted; for this Reason, that the Latin Authors who have wrote on this Subject, differ one from another. By these Authors I mean *Cicero*, *Quintilian*, and *Domitius Mar-*

Marfa, who had wrote a Treatise upon Urbanity, and whose Opinion of the Matter we should not now have known, had not *Quintilian* been at Pains to hand it down to us. 'Tis in these Writers we must endeavour to find the true Idea of Roman Urbanity. Let us begin with *Cicero*, to whom, whether in Respect of Learning or Politeness, we cannot refuse the first Place amongst Authors. Some Moderns, who have but very lightly skimm'd this Subject, have confidently told us, that *Cicero* himself did not know how to define it; and this is almost all they have told us. It is true, that *Cicero* in his Treatise of illustrious Orators, when *Brutus* asks in what he placed the Difference between the Orators of Rome, and those of the Provinces, replies, *There is none at all except this, that our Orators have a Tincture of Urbanity, the others have not.* Upon which *Brutus* desiring to know what he understood by this Tincture of Urbanity, *Cicero* adds, *I know there is such a Thing, but I can't well tell you what it is.* But afterwards *Cicero* fully explains his Notion of it; for addressing himself to *Brutus*, he says, *If ever you go into Gaul, you will easily comprehend what I mean. There Words are us'd we never bear at Rome; and setting aside such improper Words (for these we can disaccustom ourselves to) another Thing of greater Importance is, that we Romans have an Accent and Manner of Pronunciation which is infinitely sweeter and more polished than that in the Provinces.* I remember, continueth he, to have seen *T. Tinca*, a Native of *Plaisance*, a very agreeable Man, and who was nothing inferior to our Friend *Granius* in Pleasantry. I lik'd to see them match'd together: There was a charming Contest who should say the wittiest Things;



Things; and in truth, T. Tinca had as much Wit as Granius; but the latter far surpassed him by a certain Air of Urbanity he had suck'd in with the first Air he respired. And for this Reason I am not surpris'd at what we are told of Theophrastus. "He cheapen'd something  
 "an old Woman of Athens was selling. And  
 "the old Woman told him, Stranger, you may  
 "haggle as much as you please, but you shan't  
 "have it one Farthing cheaper. Theophrastus,  
 "who had been a long while at Athens, and had  
 "the Reputation of speaking well, was not a little  
 "startled to find that his Accent discover'd him  
 "to be a Foreigner, and that he could not yet  
 "pass for a Native." I believe therefore, says Cicero, that there is a Way of pronouncing our Tongue, which is peculiar to us, as there was a certain Pronunciation of the Greek which was peculiar to the Athenians.

From this Passage, and the Examples Crassus brings in the second Book concerning the Orator; that of Lælia, who spoke so well, says he, that when he heard her speak, he thought he heard a Plautus or Nevius; that of Cornelia, whose Children seem'd to have imbibed with her Milk, the Charms of her agreeable Conversation; that of Catulus likewise, whom he gives as a perfect Pattern of amiable Speech, and to whose Graces he opposes the Rusticity of Cotta.

From all this, I say, we may see first of all, that the native Romans had very delicate Ears; secondly, that their Language was more difficult to pronounce well than ours; and in the last Place, that the Urbanity of which we are treating was much more highly esteemed then, than it now is. But, which is more to my Purpose yet, it is manifest from what hath been  
 been

been said, that *Cicero* plac'd Urbanity in Purity of Language, together with a sweet and pleasing Pronunciation. For this was what principally charm'd him in *Catulus*: *Me autem tuus sonus & suavitas ista delectat, omitto verborum, quanquam est caput, sed hunc dico suavitatem quæ exit ex ore.* And in *Lælia*, whose Accent was so simple, that there was nothing of Affectation or Imitation in it, *Sono ipso vocis ita recto & simplici, ut nihil ostentationis aut imitationis afferre videatur.* Whence he concludes thus, *Since then there is a Way of Speaking peculiar to the Romans, which distinguishes them from all the other Latins, consisting in having nothing shocking or displeasing in it; nothing that makes one too remarkable, or that savours ever so little of the Provincial or Stranger; let us attach ourselves to it, and let us carefully avoid, not only all Rusticity, but every thing that hath the least Semblance of a Stranger.* We have seen what was *Cicero's* Notion of Roman Urbanity, let us now consider the Account *Domitius Marsa* gives of it.

This Author, who flourished some time after *Cicero*, and a little before, *Quintilian* takes Urbanity in a more extensive Acceptation, and assigns to it not barely Words, but Persons and Things for its Object. According to him there is one Kind of Urbanity for serious Subjects, and another for Pleasantry. He thinks every thing susceptible of this Perfection, which he affirms to have been unknown to the *Romans* till these latter Times, when instead of saying *Rome*, they used simply to say, *the City*. And so far he is in the right. But when he comes to give a Definition of it, we may see he did not understand what it was. *It is, (a) says he, a Quality*  
which

(a) *Quintil. Inst. orat. lib. 6.*

*which consists in the Propriety and Conciseness of a witty Saying that equally smarts and pleases, and is proper either for attacking or defending, according to the Differences of Persons and Occasions.* And in another Place, endeavouring to explain Cato's Sentiments about it: Cato, says he, *has a large Share of Urbanity; he excels in fine Sayings, in smart Repartees; in Conversation, or at Table, in publick Assemblies and Circles, in private Company; in solemn Harangues he has the Knack of letting fall very opportunely pleasant Things, which exceedingly delight his Hearers.* It is easy to see that these Definitions are not good. For why confine Urbanity to the Brevity or Conciseness of a Saying? And besides, were the Description just, every witty Saying would be a Stroke of Urbanity; which is so far from being true, that, as *Quintilian* justly observes, *there are witty Sayings which Urbanity does not permit either to say, or to recite after another has said them.* And *Quintilian* mentions these Definitions only to refute them, tho' on other Occasions he speaks of *Domitius Mersa* with Esteem, as a very learned and correct Writer.

But since we cannot find, neither in this Author, nor in *Cicero* himself, a just Idea of Urbanity, let us search *Quintilian* next. It is he, in reality, who hath best explained himself upon this Subject. This Rhetorician, who had Wit as well as Judgment, has not forgot to treat of this Quality, in his excellent Chapter upon *Laughing*. And as Urbanity no where displays itself to greater Advantage, than in the Manner of Rallying and receiving Raillery, he begins by distinguishing the Meanings of several Words, which are often confounded together, and promiscuously



miscuously used to signify any thing that is pleasantly said. He with great Delicacy marks the Differences between all these Words; *venustus, salsus, facetus, jocosus, dicax, urbanus*. For, says he, delicate Raillery is carried on with Urbanity; and, if I am not greatly mistaken, we understand by it a Politeness of Discourse, which by the Terms it uses, and the Manner of using them, by the very Accent and Sound of the Voice, by the Pronunciation, and the Air with which it is said, discovers a Delicacy of Taste joined with an unaffected Tincture of Erudition, imbibed by Commerce with Men of Letters; something, in fine, the Opposite to which is Rusticity. And towards the Close of this Chapter, in refuting the Opinion of *Marsus*, see how he gives his own. In my Judgment, says he, Urbanity consists in this, that there be nothing shocking in the Things we say, nothing flat or gross, nothing foreign, or that smells of the Provinces, either in the Terms, in the Pronunciation, or Gesture. So that we must not look for it in a fine or witty Saying, but rather in the whole Air of one's Discourse, if we may so speak; as among the Greeks, *Atticism* meant a certain Delicacy which was the Characteristick of the *Athenian* Taste and Manner. If contrary to my Opinion any one chooses to place Urbanity in a witty Saying, rather than in the whole Air of one's Discourse, I think nothing can point out the Nature of it better than certain Sayings, which without making one laugh, are however of the same Kind with such as do: Such as for Instance this, *That Pollio was a Man of all Hours*, to signify, that he was equally fit for Pleasure, Speculation, and Business: And what was said of a learned Person who could talk admirably

upon any Subject off-hand, *That he had all th Treasures of his Mind in ready Cash* : And what *Cicero* wrote to *Cerelia* about his bearing the Domination of *Cæsar* so patiently, *It requires Cato's Heart, or Cicero's Stomach*. Let us add to these Examples that of *Horace*,

*Interdum urbani, parcentis viribus, atque  
Extenuantis eas consulto :*

And here I think we have the full and true Character of Urbanity. Because *Quintilian* seems to place its principal Merit in a delicate Taste joined with a secret Tincture of Erudition acquired by Converse with Men of Letters ; some mistaking these last Words, may imagine, that a Scholar can hardly have this good Quality of Urbanity. But *Horace* here lets us know, that it well befits a learned Person, who being always modest, accommodates himself to those he converses with or speaks to, and is not fond of displaying his Erudition. And for this Reason Disguise and Irony have always been favourite Qualities with the greatest Men. Witness among the *Greeks* that Sage, who was the Ornament and Glory of Paganism, *Socrates* : And among the *Romans*, *Scipio Africanus*, the second *Africanus* I mean, Son to *Emilius Paulus* : Both these are famous in History for their uncommon Virtues ; but both are no less so, on account of this ironical Turn, which is properly the Salt of Urbanity.

To prove this, I need only recall to your Memories, what *Cicero* says of both in his Second Book of an Orator. Of this Character, says *Fannius* in his Annals, was *Africanus* ; it is called

called by the Greeks *εἰρων*. But the Person who chiefly excelled in this pleasant Quality, as they tell us who best understood what it is, was Socrates. He far surpassed every one in Dissimulation and Irony, by his Facetiousness and humane Pleasantry.

To give therefore an adequate, clear Idea of Roman Urbanity in a few Words, we may say, *urbanus* is a Word, which taken in the proper Sense signifies a Citizen, as *agrestis* and *rusticus* signify one who lives in the Country. Now as those who live in the City commonly speak better than the Country People, the Term *Urbanitas* was used to characterise the Language of the former. And because the Roman Language was no where spoke so perfectly as at Rome, Rome being in Quality of the Capital of the Empire, called by Way of Eminence, *Urbs*, The City; as instead of saying *Homer* anciently, it was said *the Greek Poet*; and as since we say *the Latin Poet*, instead of saying *Virgil*: Thus this Word *Urbanitas* was as it were consecrated to signify that Purity of Language, that sweet and agreeable Pronunciation which distinguished the true Romans from all the other People of Italy. Roman Urbanity at first meant no more, nor did *Atticism* originally signify any other Thing. Cicero furnishes us with a very convincing Proof of this, when he says, *That for a long Time Athens had not produced any learned Men, and had now no other Glory but that of being the Seat of the Sciences, abandoned by its own Citizens; to which Strangers went to study, attracted by the Reputation of a City which had formerly been in a very flourishing Condition* However, continueth he, *the meanest Burgeses of Athens speaks better Language than the most learned Asiaticks;*



not that they use other Words, but with regard to the Sweetness and Agreeableness of their Pronunciation. Quintilian says much the same. He places the whole Merit of *Atticism* in the native Charms of the *Attick* Language; and to this he attributes the Superiority of the *Greek* Comick Poets above all others who had attempted to compose in the same Way. Comedy being an Imitation of the Ridiculous in Manners, in painting it the Poets found an Advantage in their Tongue, which no other Language had. "For as to us, says he, with our *Cæcilius*, our *Plautus*, our *Terence*, scarcely have we the Shadow of Comedy; and our Language seems to me to be so little susceptible of the Graces of the *Attick*, and so unfit for Comedy, that the *Greeks* themselves were not able to succeed so well in it, when they employed any other Dialect."

It is then incontrovertible, that originally *Roman Urbanity* solely consisted in Sweetness and Purity of Language. But afterwards this Term had a more comprehensive Meaning, and was used to express that Politeness which discovers itself not merely in the Speech, but in the Turn of the Mind, in the Air and Manner of Persons. Nor was it long confined to so narrow a Signification; for this Politeness taking often the Place of real Virtues, and rendering us very little better at Bottom, *Urbanity* came insensibly to be made a Moral Quality, or to speak more properly, a Virtue, the Use of which consists in rendering one amiable and fit for Society. Infomuch that *Urbanity*, to take it in its just Sense, hath come to mean the same with what the *Greeks* understood by *ἡθὺς*, and the *Latins* by *moderatus*,

mores, Manners. This we may infer from the Definition *Quintilian* gives of what we call Manners. *I think*, says he, *what we mean by Manners, consists above all in a certain gracious Turn, a Sweetness and Complaisance which is so becoming and engaging, that the Persons who have it never fail to charm all they have to do with: And the Perfection of Writing lies in establishing this Character so well, that all the Writer says, appears to flow naturally from the Persons and Things he treats of.*

Would not one imagine that he was defining Urbanity? Is not this the very Idea of it we form to ourselves? If we look narrowly into *Cicero*, we shall find, notwithstanding what hath been cited from him, that he had the same Conception of it. In fact, neither he nor *Quintilian*, or any other Author, has almost ever employ'd the Terms *Urbanus* and *Urbanitas* without applying them to Manners; either by joining some Word to them which determines them to that Signification, or by the natural Sense of the Phrase. No other Proof of this is necessary, besides the Passage of *Cicero* already quoted, where he speaks of the Irony of *Socrates*; that is, of that Urbanity turn'd to Pleasantry, which made his Character. *Socratem opinor in hac ironia dissimulantiaque longé lepore & humanitate omnibus præstitisse.*

*Lepore* signifies the Wit and Manner: *Humanitate* respects the good Manners, or moral Part. And to say the Truth, the ironical Character of *Socrates* did not consist either in Derision or Contempt; but in a certain Disguise which was perfectly innocent: And accordingly we find his Contemporaries never complained of it. I might bring other Examples

from *Cicero*, as when writing to *Appius Pulcher*, he says to him, *Te hominem non solum sapientem, verum etiam, ut nunc loquimur, urbanum*. For it is telling him, he was not one of those austere, morose, gloomy Sages, only proper to bring Philosophy into Disrepute, but one who could give Charms to Virtue. And we may observe, in passing, from this Passage of *Cicero*, that in his Time the Word *Urbanus* was not very current. This makes *Quintilian* say, *Cicero favorem & urbanum nova credit*. *Cicero* calls *favor* and *urbanus* new Words.

Delicate, polite Raillery was Urbanity; biting ill-natur'd Raillery was no longer dignified by that Name, but was called *dicacitas*, scoffing, taunting, what *Horace* calls *sal nigrum*, Caustick Salt.

*Ille Bioncis sermonibus & sale nigro.*

Hence two Things are plain. First, that our Words Civility, Politeness, Gallantry, as I have already said, are but bad Equivalents for expressing the Urbanity of the *Romans*: The Second is, that Urbanity, to define it well, being a certain Character of Politeness mix'd with Goodness, which makes itself felt in the Turn of the Mind, in a Person's Sentiments and Discourse; it is a Quality so necessary to a Writer, to a Man of Letters, to a Scholar, that without it, or if it be not very sensible in his Writings, he may gain Reputation to his Wit and Erudition, but not to his Person.

By the Help of these Ideas of Urbanity, it is easy to judge who are the Authors ancient and modern who have excelled in it. If we  
con-



confine it to that Politeness of Taste and Purity of Language, of which I spoke in the first Place, we cannot refuse the Character to almost any of the Ancients, whose Works have escaped the Injury of Time, nor to a very great Number of Moderns. But considered as a Perfection that extends to Sentiments and Manners, there are but very few Writers who can lay claim to it. At the Head of this small Number, we may without Hesitation place *Homer*. Those gracious, delightful Ideas, with which his Writings are filled; that easy and natural Choice in which he excells so eminently; that Sweetness of the *Ionick* Dialect, which he prefers to all others; those beautiful Sentences which are so appositely diffused through his Poems; in fine, that judicious blending of the Virtuous and Instructive with the Agreeable ——— What is all this but the Perfection of Urbanity, or rather the *aseiōnē* of the *Greeks*? In fact, setting aside a few Customs of his Age, which appear rude to us, more perhaps thro' our own Fault than that of those Times, and for painting which *Homer* is no more to be blamed than *Reubens* and *Vandyke* now are, for having represented the Women they drew with Verdingales and Collars.

Besides, I know no Author who hath surpassed *Homer* in uniting Urbanity with the Grand and Sublime. Tho' *Pindar* be more renowned for his Elevation of Stile, yet there are Strokes of Urbanity in his Works which exceedingly charm. The learned Academician, who has given us so fine a Translation of him, makes us feel this. *Euripides* and *Sophocles* have given such Manners and Graces to their Tragedies, that we may see Urbanity was natural to them. And this may yet more justly be said of *Anacreon*.

We cannot refuse this Character to *Socrates*, and much less to *Demosthenes*, after the Testimony *Quintilian* gives of him, or rather gives as the unanimous Sentiment of Antiquity. *Demosthenem urbanum fuisse dicunt, dicacem negant.* But we must own that this Quality is most remarkable in *Plato*. Never did any one better manage Irony, that Irony I mean, which has nothing but what is exceeding amiable in it. Insomuch that *Cicero* says, he has immortalized himself by the Character of *Socrates* he has transmitted to Posterity, who by hiding the most steady and firm Virtue under the Appearances of common Life, and a Mind replenished with a Knowledge of every Kind, under the most simple Exterior, acted a most singular and truly admirable Part. The *Latin* Writers being better known, there is no occasion to mention them. For who, for instance, does not know that *Terence's* Writings abound so much in Urbanity, that they were in his own Time ascribed to *Scipio* and *Lælius*, the two humanest and best-bred Men of *Rome*? And who does not feel that the Beauty of *Virgil's* Poetry, the Delicacy of *Horace's* Wit and Expression, the Tenderness of *Tibullus*, the marvellous Eloquence of *Cicero*, the soft Abundance of *Titus Livius*, the happy Conciseness of *Sallust*, the elegant Simplicity of *Phædrus*, the prodigious Learning of *Pliny* the Naturalist, the strong Sense of *Quintilian*, the profound Politicks of *Tacitus* — Who does not feel, I say, that those excellent Qualities, which are scattered amongst so many different Authors, and which make the particular Character of each of them, are not all seasoned with *Roman* Urbanity? I pass therefore to Moderns,  
and

and not to be too long, I confine myself to our own Writers.

Since the Establishment of the Academy for the *French* Language, to write our Language purely and politely is no longer a Merit, it is now become so common : But to write with *Urbanity* is quite another Thing. I shall explain myself. According to the Principles we have laid down, *Urbanus* in *Latin* signifies almost the same as *nôtre bonnesté homme*. Now where we give one this Character, what do we mean ? If we take the Trouble to examine the Idea we have in our Mind, we shall find that we conceive him to be a Person who looks like what he is, a Person of Wit and Politeness ; one who has a well-cultivated and well-furnished Mind, and withal Probity and Virtue. To write therefore with Urbanity, is to write politely, in a natural, easy Manner, which doth not favour of the Author, but shews Delicacy of Taste and Discernment, and withal, a thoroughly honest and virtuous Soul. When I say *Virtue*, I do not exact that rigid Virtue which is meant by *Vir probus*, in *Latin*, and *L'homme de bien* in *French*, but a Sort of Virtue made as it were for Society. Whence I conclude, that those unblushing Authors, who dishonour themselves by daring to hurt publick Virtue ; those perverse Spirits, who are capable of corrupting a whole Nation by their unlucky Talent of rhiming smoothly impious, obscene Sentiments, are absolute Strangers to Urbanity. I shall not here mention *Rabelais*, nor *Marot*, nor *Regnier*, nor *Scarron*, nor *Fontain*, whatever Merit they may have in other Respects : But I will cite *Voiture*, *Sarasin*, *Racine*, *Father Bouhours*, and yet more especially



ally Vaugelas, and Pellisson. The latter hath so fully expressed this Character *d'un bonnest homme*, in his History of the French Academy : And the other, who was the Oracle of his Time for the Language, proposes his Doubts and resolves them in so polite a Manner, and with such amiable Modesty, that I make no Difficulty to give them both for perfect Models of the Urbanity belonging to our Language. When you read their Works, you feel the Love of their Writings warm into Love to their Persons ; such is the Effect of this rare Quality. Have I not by defining it, and speaking of it, excited an Emulation in the Reader to acquire it ? Let me then treat of the proper Means for attaining to this Excellency.

## PART II.

Roman Urbanity, like all other good Qualities, in order to be eminent must be equally owing to Nature and to Culture. By owing to Nature, I mean owing to a happy Birth ; for some are born with a stiff and perverse Constitution, others with a pliable and humane Temper ; some come into the World rude and untractable, others soft and docile ; some thoughtless and volatile, others attentive and circumspect ; whence different natural Obstacles and Furtherances with respect to the Virtue I am now treating of. By owing to Culture, I understand continued Improvement, consisting in a good Education, and in the Care that ought to succeed to it. Let us see how all this comes to be requisite to the Formation of this Character of Ur-

Urbanity, of which *Cicero* vaunts so much, in speaking of the *Romans* in his Time, and which is in reality so inestimable.

The *Greeks*, to signify a Person, who excelled in any Art, said, he knew it like one who had learned it in his Infancy (*παιδομαθής*): And this we may in a particular Manner apply to Urbanity. For if we do not take the Tincture in our early Years (or the Colour of it, to use *Cicero's* Words) hardly can we ever attain to it: And for this Reason the Ancients, who have treated of Education, have carried their Researches into Things which appear to us Moderns *minutæ*, i. e. very frivolous. *Cbrysippus*, for instance, thought it of Importance to find Nurses of good Sense, nay of Learning; and *Quintilian* thinks that at least we ought to take care that they speak well. "It is the Nurse, *says he*, who is first heard by the Infant; 'tis therefore her Voice and Words the Infant will imitate; but what is learned at that Age makes a deep and lasting Impression. Let not the Infant then be accustomed in his tenderest Years to a Language or Pronunciation, which it shall afterwards be obliged with great Difficulty to unlearn." If any thing be confirmed by Experience, our Author's Reason is. To be convinc'd of this, we need only reflect how hard, not to say impossible it is, to get rid of a bad Accent one hath been inured to. When does one entirely shake off the *Gascoigne*, *Provençal*, or *Parisian* Accent, which last is perhaps the worst of the three? This Difficulty solely arises from Habit early contracted. 'Tis because the Sounds which first strike the tender Fibres of the Brain, and the first Ideas that enter into an Infant-mind, make so forcible an Impression

sion upon it, that they can scarcely be effac'd by any Labour. And hence it is obvious, that it is of great Importance to accustom a Child betimes to that Purity of Language and Accent, which is one of the principal Ingredients of Urbanity. Cicero does not extend his Views so far as Quintilian, but he would have Parents and Preceptors to conspire in giving early a Taste of true Politeness to Infants; and it is to the happy Influence of Domestick Examples he attributes the Merit of the Gracchi, and of the illustrious Son of Lælius. In reality, there are in all Languages very bad Accents, from which one preserves himself with great Difficulty. Witness Demosthenes, who found it so hard to pronounce the Letter R, which he used to sound like L. The most shocking Pronunciations are those described by Cicero, in his third Book of the Orator, where he says, *I would not have one sound all the Letters in a Puerile, School-boy, affected Manner, nor yet let them slip carelessly from him. I would not have one pronounce them too feebly, as if he let them drop from his Lips, nor would I have him to give them too strong a Sound, or too much Emphasis.* These Defects are almost always contracted in one's Infancy; and therefore Quintilian, who hath over-look'd nothing that relates to the Improvement of Speech, recommends most earnestly that we should take Care no bad Habit take deep Root in us. *To the End,* says he, *that a Child may acquire early a neat Pronunciation, he should be accustomed to repeat as quickly, and with as much Volubility as he can, certain barbarous Names, the ill-coupled Syllables of which seem to be join'd together by Force, and not naturally; and likewise certain Phrases and Verses consisting of*  
*harsh*



harsh Words, which clash and juggle one with another. This is the Way to form that soft and polish'd Pronunciation which the Greeks called *εὐφωνία*, and which Cicero admired so much in Catulus. *Hanc dico suavitatem quæ exit ex ore.* But it is not enough to pronounce well, one ought to speak well: The Euphony of the Greeks is a small Attainment, unless one join with it their *ὀρθότης*, their Correctness and Purity of Language, called by the Latins, *Emendata cum suavitate vocum explanatio.* This we can't acquire without both the Knowledge of Rules and Practice. Rules are requisite to shew and guard us against the principal Vices of Speech. We must therefore study them. Practice is necessary in order to avoid improper Words, or mean and low ones, which are directly contrary to Urbanity. We must know them, and be inured to shun them. But Propriety and Purity of Language is learned from good Writers, and yet better from the Conversation of polite Persons. Why do Women, in fact, speak better than Men? It was so in Cicero's Time, as well as now, and he gives the Reason of it. *It is because the Sex being less exposed than Men to all Sorts of Company, it is easier for them to preserve their Language pure and uncorrupted.*

May I here make a Reflexion upon the Education we commonly give our Children? It is very remote from the Precepts I have mentioned. We take a vulgar Woman for a Nurse, and it is from her the Child learns to speak; To the Nurse succeeds a Governante, who speaks not a bit better; and out of her Hands the Child passes into those of a Preceptor, to whose Capacity so little Attention is paid, that it is not thought

thought necessary he should have any. Hath the Child arrived to six or seven Years of Age? he mixes with a Herd of equally ill-educated Boys at College, where under the Pretext of teaching him *Latin*, no Regard is had to his Mother-Tongue. And what happens? What we see every Day. A young Man of eighteen, who has had this Education, cannot read: For to articulate the Words and join them together, I don't call reading, unless one can pronounce well, observe all the proper Stops, vary the Voice, express the Sentiments, and read with a delicate Intelligence. Nor can he speak a Jot better. A Proof of this is, that he can't write ten Lines without committing gross Faults; and because he did not learn his own Language in his early Years, he will never know it well. I except a few, who being afterwards engaged by their Profession, or their natural Taste, cultivate their Minds by Study. And yet even they, if they attempt to write, will find by the Labour Composition costs them, what a Loss it is not to have learned their Language in the proper Season. Education amongst the *Romans* was upon quite a different Footing: The *Greek* was their learned Language; it was taught in publick Schools; they gave Application to understand it, but they were no less solicitous to learn their own. Grammar-masters taught them early the Principles, the Difficulties, the Subtleties, the Depths of it. Masters of Rhetorick instructed them in all its Riches and Beauty. When they went from these Schools they were perfect Masters of their own Tongue; they never were at a Loss for proper Expressions; and I am much deceived if it was not owing to this,

this, that they produced such excellent Works with so marvellous Facility. When we consider the Writings *Cato the Censor, Cicero, Varro, Caesar, Brutus, Pliny, and Seneca* left behind them, Men who had so much other Business to employ them, Men who had such a Share in all the Affairs of their Times, we can't comprehend how they could be equal to all they really did; and nothing can account for it but the Reason we have given. It is not astonishing, therefore, if the Urbanity which consists primarily in the Purity of Language, was so common among the *Romans*, and is so rare amongst us. I shall finish this Article with what *Quintilian* says in the first Chapter of his first Book. *He advises the Romans to begin by learning the Greek: And he adds, that the Latin ought to follow soon after, and then both ought to be carried on together; thus by giving equal Care to improve both these Languages, neither of the two will hurt the other.* We cannot give too much Application to the *Greek and Latin Tongues*: They are the Sources of useful Learning: But in cultivating these two Languages, we ought not to neglect our own. In this Manner, none of these Languages will be detrimental to any of them.

I have said, that *Roman Urbanity* originally meant no more, but that Purity of Language which distinguished the *Romans* from the other *Italians*, and was the same with the *Atticism* of the *Greeks*: But in process of Time this Term was used to signify that Character of Politeness, which reigns in the Air and Manners of a Person. But Urbanity taken in this Sense is the Fruit of good Education. Accordingly  
the



the great Men I have mention'd, whom we may consider as the Legislators of Education, have recommended every thing that can contribute to polish Youth. They would have Musick, Dancing, and the genteel Exercises, and even the Theatre itself; all the Arts, in one Word, concur to give them the Graces which render Knowledge and Virtue amiable. *Dandum etiam aliquid comædo*, says *Quintilian*. Youth ought to take Lessons even from Players, not barely to learn a correct and just Pronunciation, but to form their Countenance and Gesture. With regard to Musick, he makes it to be an Art absolutely necessary to all who would pass for Persons of liberal Education: And it is because Musick, according to *Aristoxenus*, comprehends two Kinds of Numbers or Measures; one for regulating the Voice, and the other for regulating those Motions of the Body, whence results good Grace in the outward Carriage. As to the Exercises, 'tis well known what Stress the Ancients laid upon them; and what Share they had in the Formation of their Youth. Tilt and Tournament came in the Room of the ancient Exercises, and were for some time in great Vogue amongst us; and at present to the Gymnastick Exercises of the Ancients, which a learned Member of this Academy hath so accurately described in his Dissertation upon them, have succeeded those Exercises which our Youth learn at our Academies, of which however they are now become less fond than they were formerly. But *Cicero* would much rather have a young Man form himself upon the Model of Soldiers, who have, to say the Truth, a much  
easier

easier and freer Air than most others. These were the Methods the *Romans* took to acquire the Urbanity for which they are so celebrated; Methods so much the more easy, that a very little Practice in them suffices for giving an agreeable Exterior to more solid and more essential Virtues. This *Quintilian* expressly tells us; his Words deserve to be cited. *Neque enim gestum componi ad similitudinem saltationis volo, sed subesse aliquid ex hac exercitatione puerili, unde nos non id agentes furtim decor ille discipulis traditus prosequatur.* I would not have one carry his Body as if he were dancing, but I would have something of this Puerile Exercise to remain, so that, without thinking of it, we may do every thing with the Grace it is principally design'd to render natural to us. He plainly hath a View to these Verses of *Tibullus*:

*Illam quidquid agit, quoquo vestigia flectit,  
Componit furtim, subsequiturque decor.*

It must be acknowledged however, that these Methods of polite Education are now very much neglected. Some go so far as to affirm, that they are not necessary to all Conditions of Persons. Thus do many of our People of the Gown think. And hence it is, that the Urbanity of which I have been discoursing, and which would so well besit them; is not very common among them. For why may not one speak here what he really thinks, when he hath no other View but the publick Good? The austere and rigid Education which they for the greater Part receive, and by natural Consequence give to their Children, degenerates in-

to a sort of Gravity, which *M. le Duc de la Rochefoucault* defines to be a *mysterious Exterior*, invented to hide the Defects of the Mind. I should rather choose to say, the Defects of Education. They do not reflect, that very often the Want of Urbanity suffices to make the greatest Talents, and the greatest Virtues hated or contemned. The *Romans* had in this Respect great Advantages above us. Amongst them Professions were not distinguished, or confined within narrow Bounds, as they are amongst us. Here one of the Robe is merely a Man of the Robe, a Magistrate is solely a Magistrate, a Scholar a mere Scholar, a Soldier nothing but a Soldier; a Churchman has his particular Functions, and he meddles with little else. It was not so in ancient *Rome*: The same Person had many different Talents; he was Scholar, Barrister, Soldier, Priest, Augur or Pontiff, at one and the same Time. I can easily imagine, that a Person who was sufficiently qualified for so many different Professions, derived Graces from each of them, which naturally diffused themselves thro' all the rest. And hence I understand, that *Roman Urbanity* was not an empty Name. In fact, all the *Romans*, during some Time at least, went to War: The first of their Employments were equally Military and Civil; I mean that of Quæstor, which we may compare to our Offices of Pay-master to, or Intendant of the Army. Was there ever a better Barrister, or one who attended the Bar more closely than *Cicero*? Yet he commanded an Army, he had the Title of General, and kept it a considerable Time. *Horace*, Coward as he was, had how-  
 ever serv'd under *Brutus*. But the same Persons  
 knew



knew how to distinguish themselves in Time of Peace as well as of War. A General of the Army, after having extended the *Roman* Dominion by his Conquests, after having gain'd Victories, and had the Honour of a Triumph, returning to *Rome*, and becoming a simple Citizen, found, in the Diversity of his Talents, new Employment for his Ambition. He became a Protector of the Laws, a Defender of oppress'd Innocence; and at the Bar, or in the Senate, disputed the Prize of Eloquence with the most distinguish'd Orators. It is no Wonder that such a Person pleaded or harangued with the same Courage he fought, as is said of *Cæsar*; nor that he mingled with his Exercises at the Bar, the military Graces he had imbibed by Commerce with the Gentlemen of the Sword; nor that by consequence he should have so far surpass'd us in what I call Urbanity. Add to this, that all Persons of Birth at *Rome* travell'd into *Greece*, and went to improve their Taste of the polite Arts in the very Bosom of Politeness; not to mention their having *Greeks* at *Rome*, very well qualified to instill early this Taste into them, or to cultivate it. All these are Advantages we want, and many of them are not agreeable to our Manners, our Customs, our Form of Government, or of Religion. But for this Reason the Culture I am now speaking of is so much the more necessary: And it consists, as hath been said, in a good Education, and proper After-care. I will give you a strong Example of what these may do, with regard to Urbanity. It is in *Horace*, as far as I am able to judge, that the Character of Urbanity shines more than in any other of the *Latin* Poets, Now we need only

ly call to Mind a Passage, in which this Poet having very modestly prais'd himself, rather for the Vices from which he was free, than for any Virtues he possess'd, attributes all the Honour of his Merit to the Education his Father had given him.

*Causa fuit pater his, qui macro pauper agello,  
Noluit in Flavî ludum me mittere ; magni  
Quò pueri magnis è centurionibus orti,  
Lævo suspensi loculos, tabulamque lacerto  
Ibant oëtonis referentes idibus æra.*

*Sed puerum est ausus Romam portare, docendum  
Artes quas doceat quivis eques, atque senator  
Semet prognatos : vestem, servosque sequentes  
In magno ut populo si quis vidisset, avitâ  
Ex re præberi sumptus mihi crederet illos.  
Ipse mihi custos incorruptissimus omnes  
Circum doëtoris aderat.*

L. I. Sat. 6.

See here a Model of Education worthy of being imitated. But what did *Horace* himself add to this Care? Not satisfied with the Masters he had had at *Rome*, he went to seek others at *Athens*. So he himself informs us.

*Adjecere bonæ paulo plus artis Athenæ.*

Tho' he was not very brave, yet he would needs make some Campaigns, probably to learn the Military Art, the properest and most improving to young Men. But neither the Licentiousness which commonly attends that Profession, nor the Amusements and Dissipation into which  
Youth

Youth is so apt to run, ever diminished his Taste for Study and polite Literature: He lov'd them so much, as to think Books as necessary to Life as the Things which support it.

*Sit mihi librorum & provisæ frugis in annum  
Copia.*

Born a Poet, he compos'd Verses rather like a Gentleman than a Poet by Profession, despising the Approbation of the Vulgar, and solicitous only to please a small Number of select Readers.

— *Neque te ut miretur turba, labores,  
Contentus paucis lectoribus.*

Accordingly in reading *Homer*, with whom he was so charm'd, he studied him as a Philosopher more than as a Poet: He thought he was reading *Chrysippus*, or *Crantor*; and referred every thing he read in him, to Life and Manners.

*Qui quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile,  
[quid non,  
Plenius ac melius Chrysippo & Crantore dicit.*

The Lowness of his Birth did not dispirit him; encouraged by his happy Endowments he frequented the Great, and knew how to please them. Admitted on one Side into the Familiarity of *Pollio*, of *Messala*, of *Lollius*, of *Mæcenas*, of *Augustus*; and on the other Side, being in strict Friendship with *Virgil*; with *Varus*, with *Tibullus*, with *Plotius*, with *Valgius*; in one Word, with all the best Men of *Rome*; I am not surprized that he by Commerce



merce with these great Men acquired that Politeness, that delicate refined Taste which his Writings make us feel. This is what I call a continued Culture, and such as is requisite to the Character of Urbanity. In reality, however good one's Education may have been, if one ceases to improve and cultivate his Mind and Manners by Reflexion and by Conversation with well-accomplished Persons, and above all with Persons bred at Courts, to whom Politeness is as it were natural, he cannot avoid falling into something very opposite to Politeness and Urbanity. Accordingly it is reported of *Cicero*, that he could not let the smallest Fault in speaking pass unreprieved in his Son; and of *Cæsar*, that as much as he was taken up with his grand Projects, he studied Purity of Language in his Tent, and amidst the Noise and Hurry of Arms. Some may perhaps look upon these Things as Trifles; but to such let me make the Answer *Quintilian* gave on a very like Occasion. *These Accomplishments do not hurt those who use them as Steps by which they may rise to others, but those only who stop there, and confine themselves to them alone.*

Let us next consider that Sort of Urbanity which belongs to Raillery; for we may distinguish two Kinds of it with *Domitius Marsus*, one for the Serious, and another for the Pleasant. As to the latter, it hardly admits of Precepts. Here my two Guides abandon me; for both affirm, that this Sort of Raillery cannot be taught. And much less then can that delicate Manner of Raillery be taught in which this Kind of Urbanity consists. *Accidit difficultati, quod ejus rei nulla exercitatio est, nulli præceptoris*, says *Quintilian*.

tilian. And Cicero in his Treatise of an Orator likewise asserts, that there is no Art of Wit or pleasant Raillery: *Nullum esse artem salis*. One of the Personages in this Dialogue expressly tells us, *That having seen some Greek Books, entitled, the Art of Raillery, he expected at first to have learned something from them, but that in fact he found nothing in them but Examples of pleasant and witty Sayings; for, says he, the Sicilians, the Rhodians, the Byzantines, and above all the Athenians, excell'd in this Way.* Indeed those who have attempted to reduce this Matter into an Art have made their Readers laugh, but at their own Cost; for they have made themselves truly ridiculous. Hence he concludes that it is not a Thing that can be taught by Rules; and he gives a very good Reason why. It is a Talent that must be born with one, or for which one must be formed by Nature itself. However Quintilian, who is more particular in treating Things than Cicero, thinks young People may be turned that Way by other Methods. Yet, after all, those great Masters only prescribe a certain Temperament or Moderation that ought to be preserved in Raillery, that it may have that Air of Urbanity, which is so becoming a Man of Worth. What they principally recommend to us is, first of all not to affect to make Persons laugh; and they observe, that Raillery better becomes one in in defending than in attacking, because there it cannot be suspected of being studied or premeditated. Besides, it is natural for one to defend himself with such Arms as he is attacked with. In the second Place they advise, always to spare Persons to whom we owe Respect, or with whom we are in Friendship: A Maxim which it seems easy to observe,

observe, but which it is however almost impossible for those to observe, who have naturally a Turn for Raillery. This made *Ennius* say, that it is easier for a wise Man to hold burning Coals in his Mouth, than to keep a witty Thing that presses to get out. Accordingly, among the *Romans*, *Crassus* is the only Person who is brought as an Example of one who had singular Talents for Raillery, but could keep within the Rules of Decency; and who could as easily forbear being witty, as give Room to his Pleasantry. *Quintilian* gives us excellent Precepts upon this Head, Precepts truly worthy of the Christian Morality. *Let our Wit and Pleasantry*, says he, *always be innocent, and let us not prefer a Piece of Wit to a Friend. A humane, well-bred Man can be facetious and witty with Decency: It is putting too high a Value upon Wit and Pleasantry, to give Scope to it at the Expence of Probity.* And hence we may learn with what Care we ought to avoid all Pleasantry that is gross and low, and how attentive we should be, lest thro' Affectation of Wit we become Buffoons, a Character very unbecoming a Person of Dignity and Merit. True Pleasantry does not excite noisy Laughter, it only tickles the Soul. *Plautus* was not relished by *Horace*: It was because *Plautus* so often sinks into the low Comick, and was fitter to divert the Vulgar, than People of Fashion and Education. With these Precautions Raillery will have no more Salt than is requisite to give Life to Conversation; refined from every thing that is bitter or offensive, it will be humane and polite; which proves what I said in the first part of this Discourse, that Urbanity in its strict Sense, is a moral Virtue, which renders Society amiable



amiable and pleasant ; and therefore I shall end this Article with what *Quintilian* says after the Definition he gives of Manners. *Urbanity, besides the Perfections I have already mentioned, requires a Stock of Benevolence, which is rarely to be found but in Persons of Birth.*

That I may omit nothing that may be said about the Means of acquiring it, I shall take Notice of two Defaults which are its Opposites. The first is a certain Timidity, which gives us an embarrassed Air, and degenerates into false Modesty. The Remedy proposed for this by the Author I have so often cited, is an honest Assurance, or rather the Intrepidity of a good Conscience, to which must be added Knowledge of the World and great Practice in it, without which an honest Man, with all his Wit, will make a very awkward Figure. The other is, too great a Desire to appear polite, whence proceeds I know not what Affectation and Formality, that spoils all. For if this Character be not natural as it were to us, I would rather prefer Rusticity, which at least has the Merit of Simplicity. In fact, whatever is not easy but studied, instead of being graceful gives Pain ; and where there is no Grace, there Urbanity is not. Whatever is over-done, is unbecoming, says *Quintilian* : And for this Reason, what is in itself pleasing, loses all its Beauty if it exceeds certain Limits, and is not prudently moderated. But it is much easier to feel all this, than to explain it. The Perception of it depends more on Taste than Precepts ; wherefore, when I speak of Urbanity and the Means of acquiring it, I speak of that which is easy and natural ; of that  
for

for which *Cicero* (i) commends *Curius*, in his Letters to *Atticus*; and of which I could name very illustrious Models, without going farther than this Academy.

(a) Et mehercule est quam facile diligas *αὐτοχθὺν* in homine urbanitas.

F I N I S.



